

# SENTINEL GPT

KJV vs. Calvinism  
A Scriptural Refutation



THE  
SENTINEL  
THREEFOLD  
SYSTEM  
(UAD)

U – Uncovering Philosophical Fallacies

A – Analyzing Logical Fallacies

D – Defending Truth through  
the KJV Topical Bible  
Study Method

BY DAVID MICHAEL CURTIS

# Sentinel GPT: KJV vs. Calvinism: A Scriptural Refutation

by David Michael Curtis

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## The Sentinel Threefold System (UAD)

The *Sentinel Threefold System* is a structured method for defending truth through rigorous, Bible-centered analysis. It operates on three foundational pillars:

### **U – Uncovering Philosophical Fallacies**

Identifying and exposing flawed reasoning within philosophical arguments that challenge or distort biblical truth.

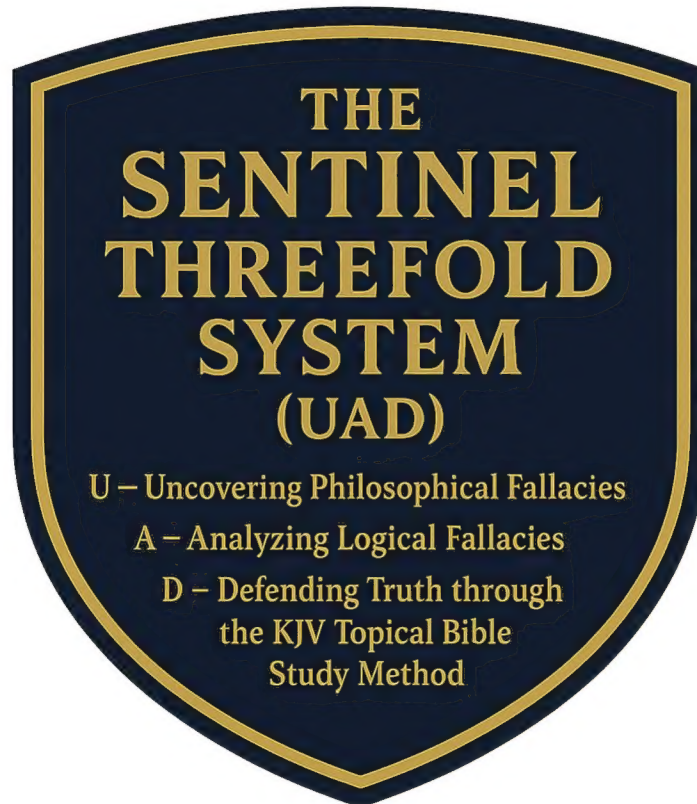
### **A – Analyzing Logical Fallacies**

Dissecting and correcting errors in logic, ensuring that all conclusions are built upon sound reasoning consistent with Scripture.

### **D – Defending Truth through the KJV Topical Bible Study Method**

Systematically applying the King James Version of the Holy Bible to doctrinal and theological issues, using a verse-by-verse, topic-driven approach to present a clear and authoritative defense of the faith.

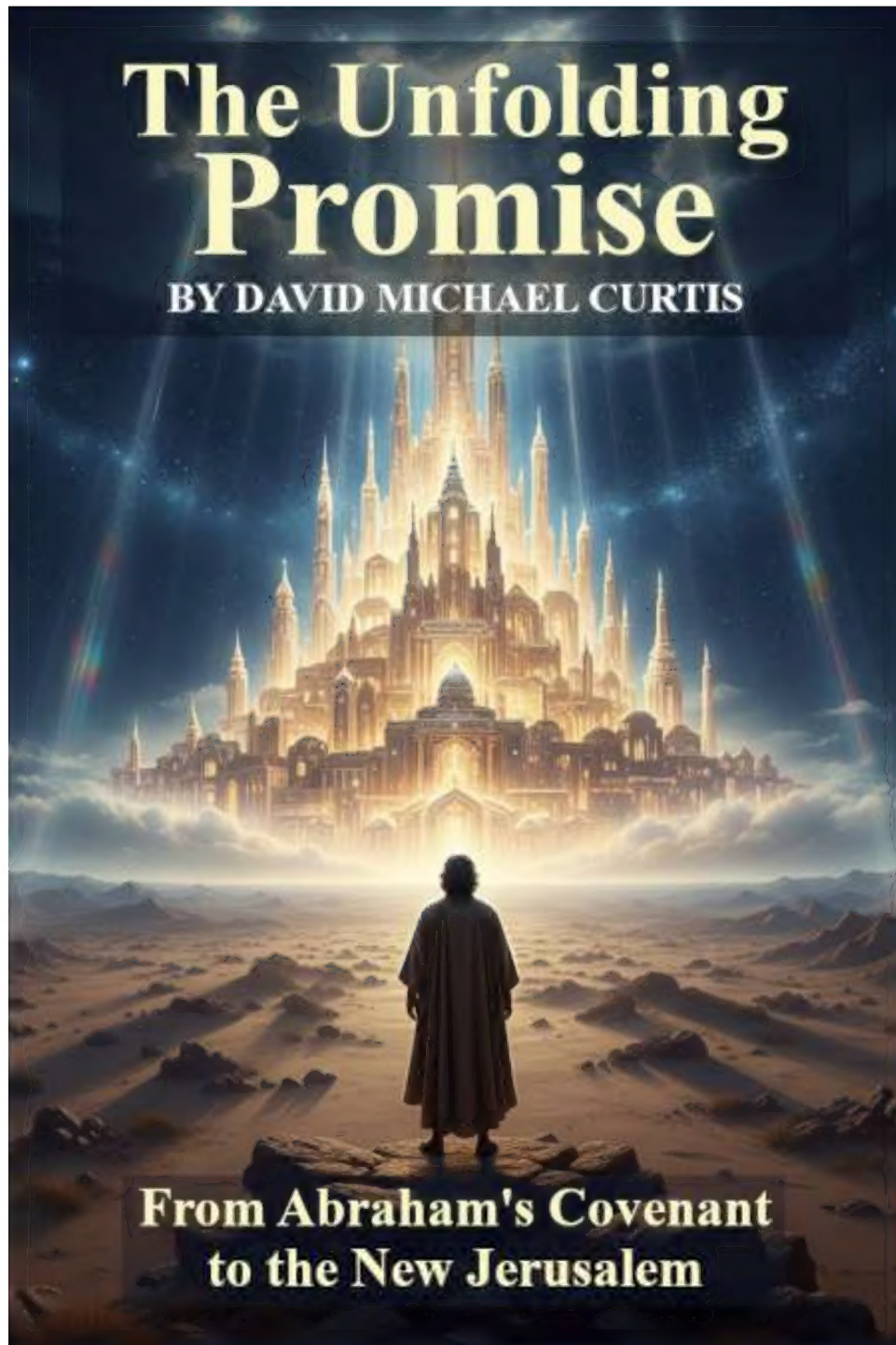
The *Sentinel Threefold System* serves as both shield and sword — guarding against deception while advancing the truth of God’s Word with clarity, precision, and conviction





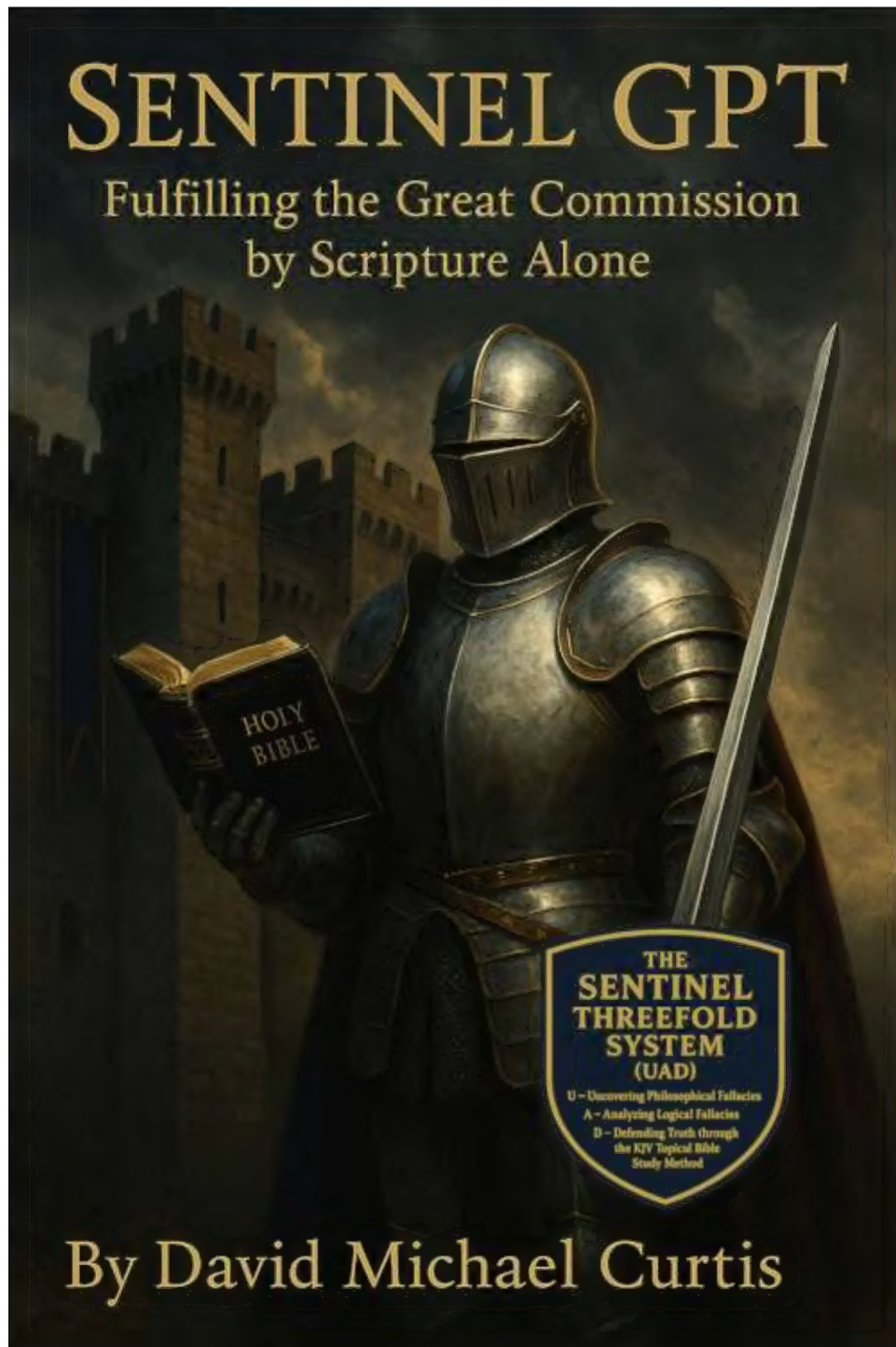
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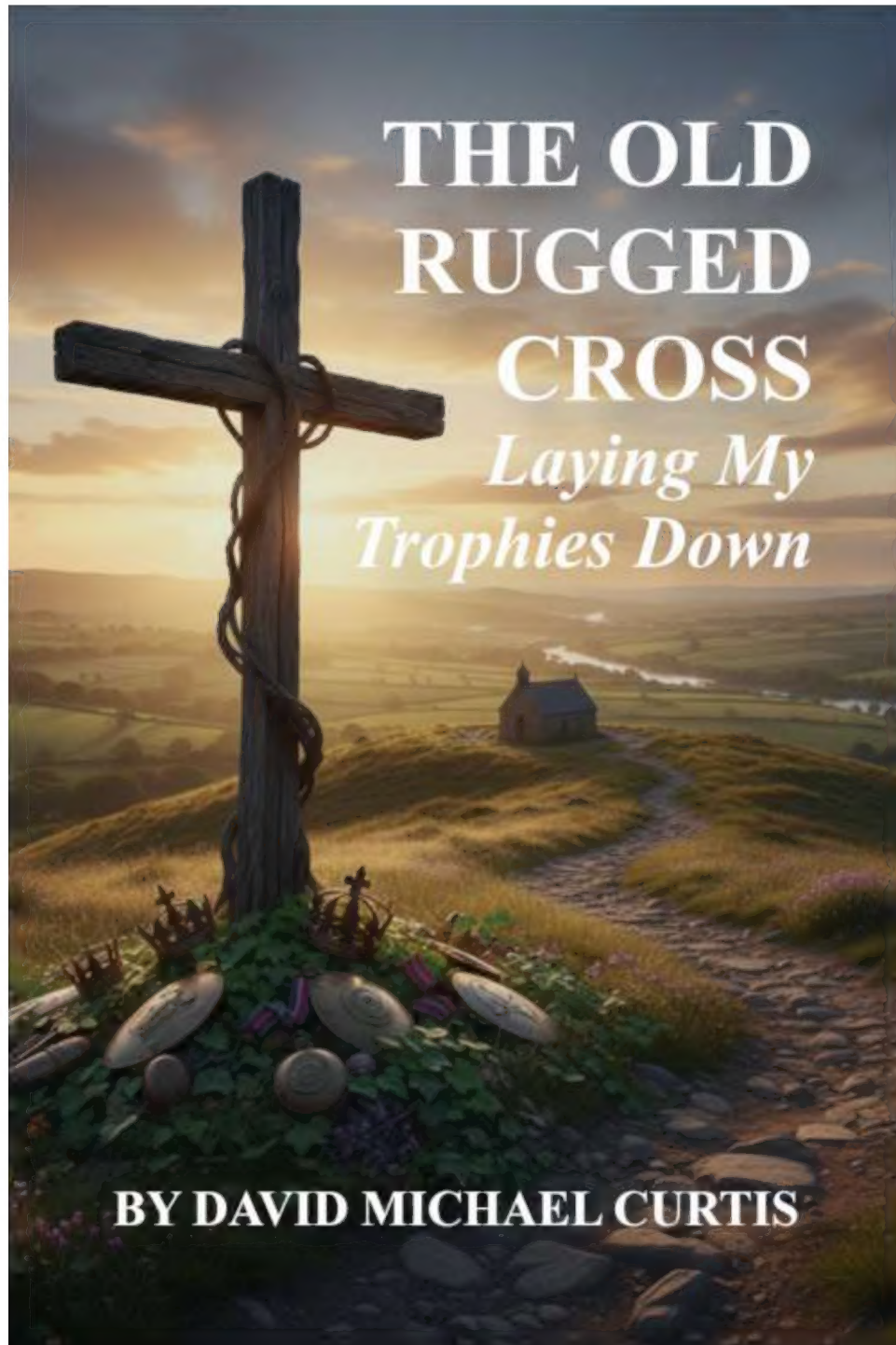
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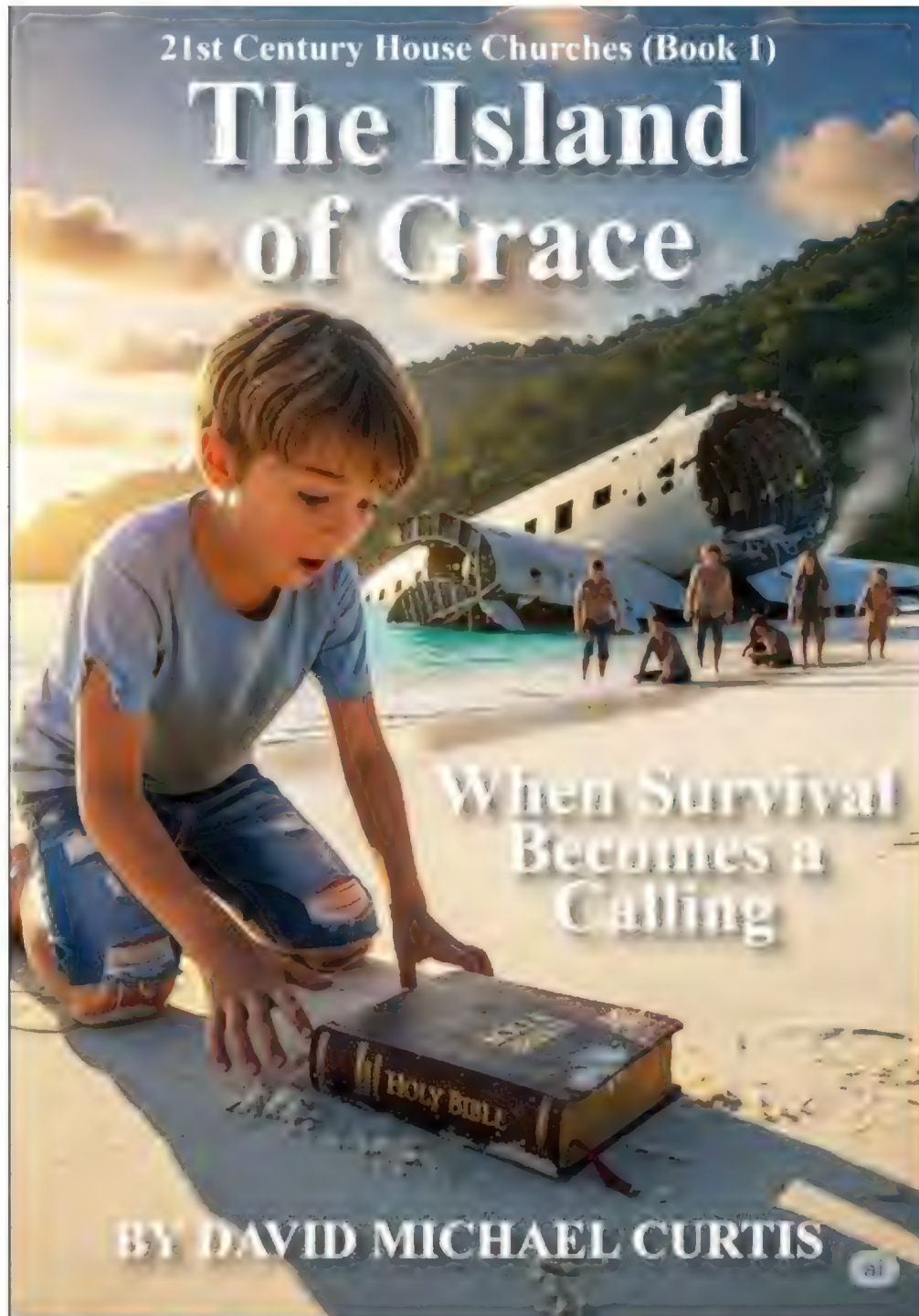
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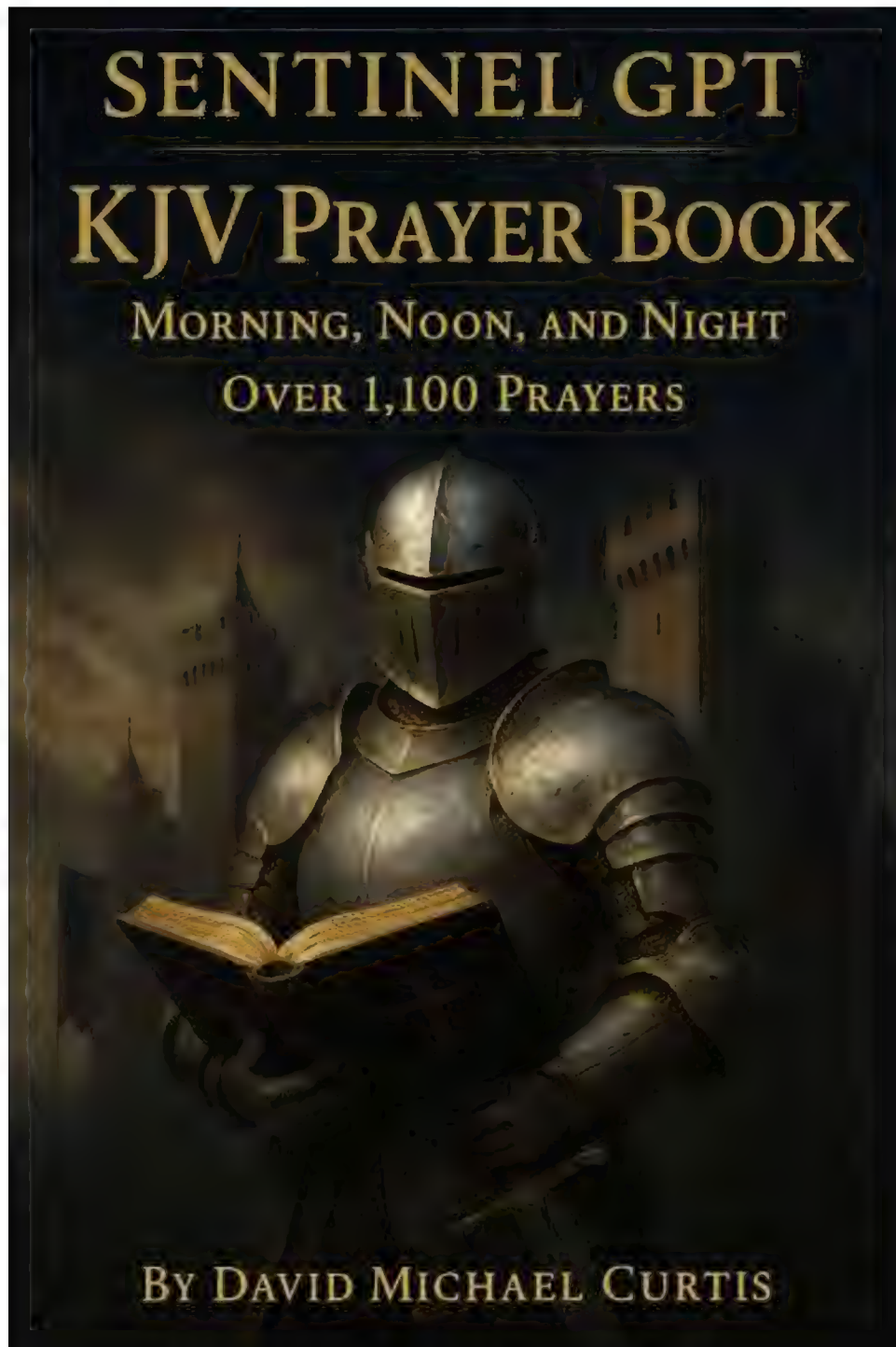
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**1 Timothy 3:2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, *given to hospitality*, apt to teach; Romans 12:13; Titus 1:8; 1Peter 4:9.



## Start a House Church

"Love Thy Neighbor" Jesus Christ

Hospitality is the most effective form of scriptural evangelism. Rather than preaching to a passive audience, invite guests into your home to find answers for themselves by reading directly from the Bible. Invaluable for this method are resources such as Nave's Topical Bible, which lists all relevant verses for over 20,000 topics. Universally approved by all denominations, this tool is simple to use, and is freely available in most Bible apps.

Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, provide guests with a King James Version Holy Bible and take turns reading each verse aloud on a given subject. Read the scriptures without the interpretive lens of institutional churches. This approach allows the Holy Ghost to teach, enabling you to step back and observe God at work. Your role is to invite guests to join your family for a potluck meal, to remember Christ's one sacrifice on the cross, followed by a Bible reading.

Since sermons are not delivered, full-time salaries are unnecessary. Every man, including the elders (pastors) and deacons, should have a job to provide for himself. Collections should be taken for the needy within the house church, such as widows, orphans, the sick, and those in prison.

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## Preface

**1 Corinthians 1:27** But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Although I am a man with a sixth-grade formal education, my life's true learning began with the Bible. In 1993, I started reading, and over the next six years, my passion for study led me to wear out the bindings of eleven leather Bibles. During the 1990s, living deep in the Sierra mountains of California without a computer or bible software, my Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and a Thompson Chain-Reference King James Bible became my constant companions. Isolated from outside influence, a natural method of study developed: if I wanted to understand a topic like faith, I would look up the word in the concordance and read every verse where it appeared. No one taught me this; it was born from a simple desire to let the Bible speak for itself.

More than thirty years later, this remains my method. I revisit over 300 of the Bibles most important topics annually, beginning with verses so clear a child could understand them. On any given subject, the vast majority of passages are straightforward. For the few that are more complex, I allow the simple and clear verses to illuminate the difficult ones. My goal is not to interpret the scriptures but to read them, believe them, and let them define their own terms.

Since the mid-1990s, I have taught this topical study method, distilled into three simple rules outlined in this book. My focus has always been to empower people to find answers for themselves, directly from the text, free from my commentary. Once you learn to find every verse on a topic and use the clear passages to understand the complex ones, you no longer need me; you possess the tools to discover biblical truth on your own. However, this is only half the task. I must also provide a crucial warning: institutional churches often teach members to view the Bible through a predetermined lens that can distort a plain understanding of the text. My aim is to teach the method and to warn of this danger, thereby protecting readers from the influence of false teachings.

Over the past three decades, I have visited countless churches across many denominations, including Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of God of Prophecy, and Roman Catholic. In these places, I have met many genuine Christians who have deeply impacted my life. In fact, several of my best friends have been ministers from various churches. It is vital to distinguish between people and doctrines. My books and sermons are unsparing toward false doctrines, but they pass no judgment on individuals. This direct approach has led me from discussions with over one hundred and fifty ministers to preaching on the radio five days a week and traveling the United States from California to New York as a door-to-door Bible salesman. Throughout my ministry, entire churches have embraced this message, while others have cast me out. There is seldom a middle ground; the conclusions reached through a topical study of the KJV Bible, and a Strong's Concordance are either loved or hated.

Since 1999, I have supported this independent ministry through my own employment and do not solicit donations. If you wish to support these efforts, you may purchase my books on Amazon. Should you disagree with what I have written, you are welcome to return any book for a refund through your Amazon account. I sincerely thank you for taking the time to preview my work.

The conclusions reached through a topical study of the KJV Bible may differ from the systematic theologies developed by men and taught in institutional churches. While these churches contain many valuable truths, they may also include man-made teachings that influence the interpretation of scripture. This can be observed across various denominations, where members are convinced they hold the biblical truth, yet their doctrines differ radically. Crucially, the topical study method is repeatable. Anyone, regardless of background, can duplicate the process and arrive at the same conclusions, provided they begin without preconceived ideas designed to align with a particular church's teachings. You are invited to test this for yourself. You can go directly to Part V to learn the method, independently study the verses for the core topics, and decide for yourself what the Bible teaches before reading this book cover to cover. It is my belief that you will then agree with its conclusions.

In the spirit of Martin Luther, who asserted that his conscience was held captive to the Word of God, this work is founded upon Holy Scripture and plain reason. I know this book will likely receive both praise and criticism, as it challenges conventional church doctrines. To those who may have questions or objections, I have sought to address them throughout the text itself and will largely allow the work to speak for itself.

My commitment is to continually refine my understanding, and I remain sincerely open to correction. I hold the Scriptures as the final authority and invite thoughtful engagement. The most constructive feedback will demonstrate a more harmonious biblical position based on a comprehensive study of all relevant verses. I am committed to correcting my work or removing it from publication if my conclusions are shown to violate the principles of topical study or rely on logical fallacies. For a critique to be effective, it should adhere to these same standards of biblical harmony and logical consistency.

To that end, I hold my own work to a rigorous threefold standard, testing every position against comprehensive topical Bible study, logical fallacies, and philosophical fallacies. I welcome any correction that engages with this standard. I do this because I hold myself to an exceptionally high standard when teaching from the Bible, knowing I must ultimately give an account to God. I am not a prophet or a teacher. I am a topical Bible student and a disciple of Jesus Christ—nothing more and nothing less.

Ultimately, my conscience is bound to the Word of God. It is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. As the apostle Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." On this foundation, I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.

David Michael Curtis

# Introduction: How to Use This Book

## Five Smooth Stones—Introducing the Five Parts of this Book

**1 Samuel 17:40,46-47,50** And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine... This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands... So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.

This book is not a novel to be read passively from beginning to end. It is a theological workshop, a master architect's toolkit designed to equip you, the reader, to become a master builder in your own right. It is a comprehensive resource for dismantling the unstable structure of man-made theological systems and for reconstructing your understanding of salvation upon the unshakeable bedrock of the King James Bible. To get the most out of this work, it is crucial to understand the purpose of its four distinct sections.

This is not a book of easy answers, but a guide to asking the right questions. It is not a substitute for your own study, but a catalyst for it. Are you ready to move beyond the shallow foundations of modern opinion and begin building on the rock?

### Part I: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Summary Answers

The first section is your quick-reference field guide. Here you will find one hundred of the most common and critical questions regarding the debate over God's sovereignty and man's salvation, each followed by a concise, single-paragraph summary answer. This is your **builder's pocket reference**. When a specific question arises in your own study or in a discussion with others, this section is designed to give you a clear, doctrinally sound, and biblically grounded starting point. It is the "what" of the biblical position, presented in a rapid-fire, easily digestible format.

### Part II: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Comprehensive Answers

The second section is the deep-dive, the reference library where the real work of theological construction takes place. For each of the one hundred questions, we provide a comprehensive, multi-faceted analysis. Each entry includes a full topical Bible study correction, a list of supporting scriptures, an anticipation of common rebuttals, an examination of the historical and logical fallacies at play, and a list of key verses. This is the **architect's detailed schematic**. This is where we move from the "what" to the "why." This section is designed for the serious student who is not content with summary answers, but who wants to see the full weight of biblical, logical, and historical evidence for themselves.



## **Part III: Why KJV, Topical Study, and House Churches?**

### **A Pillar of Truth: Why We Use the King James Version**

In a world of countless Bible translations, this book lays out the foundational reasons for choosing the King James Version. It argues that modern translations, based on the Alexandrian text-type, are different from the KJV, which is based on the superior, majority Byzantine text-type. It details how this divergence results in the omission of key phrases and verses that weaken foundational doctrines, and why the KJV provides the stable, textually complete standard necessary for rigorous, harmonized, topical Bible study.

### **Why Topical Study is True Sola Scriptura**

This chapter deconstructs the expository preaching method, arguing that it is a flawed, human-centric system that fosters dependence on a clerical elite and is prone to cherry-picking verses, leading to denominational divisions. In contrast, the topical study method is presented as the only true application of **Sola Scriptura**, enabling every believer to discover the harmonious, unified truth of God's word by diligently gathering and comparing every single verse on a given topic.

### **The Modern Institutional Church — Sacred or Pagan?**

This section examines seven practices of the modern institutional church—the sacred building, the order of worship, the sermon, the pastor, Sunday costumes, salaried ministers and tithing, and the handling of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It traces the historical origins of each, arguing that they are not rooted in the New Testament but in post-biblical, pagan, or Roman traditions. Each practice is exposed as a tradition of men that makes the Word of God of no effect, leading to a system that is unbiblical in both form and function.

### **The First-Century House Church**

This final chapter presents the first-century house church as the only biblical pattern for Christian fellowship. It shows how this model, inspired by the ancient synagogue, fosters mutual participation, true community, and the collective discovery of truth. The chapter provides a practical guide for starting a house church, arguing that this model is a safeguard against heresy and the unbiblical practices of the modern institutional church. It concludes that the restoration of the biblical church model does not require a building, a budget, or a professional pastor, but simply believers meeting in a home to study God's word.

## **Part IV; The Elijah Message**

### **The Call to Repentance**

A systematic analysis of Christ's messages to the seven churches in Revelation reveals that the command to "Repent" is a continuous, conditional requirement for the continued existence of a church. This repentance is not merely a feeling but a specific act to reverse five potential failures: the loss of a church's "first love" for Christ, the passive tolerance of heresy, complicity with seductive and immoral teachings, the hypocrisy of spiritual deadness, and the delusion of self-sufficiency. The text makes it clear that failure to repent of these issues will result in severe, certain consequences, including Christ removing the church's identity as a candlestick.

### **The Mother of Harlots**

Based on a topical analysis of Revelation 17, the "Mother of Harlots" is not an individual but a great city that represents a global, apostate religious system. Her key identifiers include: reigning over the kings of the earth and the peoples of the world; being adorned with immense wealth; making the world drunk with the "wine" of her false doctrines; and having a long history of persecuting and martyring the saints. The text identifies her as the originator of many daughter churches and traditions that share her corrupt nature, providing a precise and verifiable profile for her biblical identification.

### **The Danger of Man-Made Doctrines**

The Scriptures provide a clear warning against the substitution of human teachings for divine commands. Jesus Christ and His apostles taught that man-made doctrines and traditions do not merely add to God's Word but actively nullify it, rendering worship useless and "in vain." The text uses the metaphor of "leaven" to show how these human inventions, even in small amounts, pervasively corrupt an entire belief system. Any such "plant" not planted by God the Father is destined to be "rooted up," and believers are commanded to separate from the "blind leaders of the blind" who promote them.

### **The Blindness of Deception**

Spiritual blindness is the primary mechanism that allows for deception. This condition begins when an individual fails to understand God's Word, a vulnerability that Satan immediately exploits to "catch away" the truth and prevent salvation. The Scriptures also reveal a more severe, judicial blindness, where God confirms the willful rebellion of those who have hardened their own hearts, giving them over to a state where they are unable to see the truth. In contrast, spiritual sight is not a reward for human intellect but a gift God reveals to the humble, described as "babes."

### **Avoiding Deception**

The Scriptures provide a comprehensive, multi-layered protocol for avoiding spiritual deception. The primary directive is to be vigilant, recognizing that false prophets will not only show "great signs and wonders," but will also be "transformed" to appear as authentic "ministers of righteousness." The believer's defense is not based on emotion or supernatural experience but on applying a fixed, doctrinal test to every teaching. Upon identifying a false teacher, the biblical

mandate is to “avoid them” and refuse to extend any form of spiritual partnership, lest one become a “partaker of his evil deeds.”

### **Fables and False Gospels**

The Scriptures warn against two specific forms of spiritual corruption that arise from the rejection of sound doctrine: fables and false gospels. Fables are defined as profane, humanly-invented narratives that turn people away from the truth and cater to the “itching ears” of those who will not endure moral and doctrinal correction. A false gospel is any message that deviates from the singular, apostolic message of salvation through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Any who preach a perverted gospel are declared to be under a divine curse, and their followers are characterized by a “form of godliness” that is devoid of the true power of God.

### **The Characteristics of False Prophets**

False prophets are identified by specific and verifiable biblical traits. They are described as predatory “wolves” in “sheep’s clothing” who deceive through a disguise of piety and innocence. Their primary motive is to draw away disciples after themselves and to serve their “own belly,” or their personal appetites, using “perverse things” that twist and distort Scripture. They cater to a specific audience that has rejected sound doctrine for their own lusts, and their rhetoric is characterized by smooth, pleasing speech. Their ultimate identity is found not in their disguise or charisma, but in their corrupt fruits—the true outcome of their ministry.

### **The Simple Words of True Ministers**

In stark contrast to the persuasive rhetoric of false prophets, true ministers of God are characterized by a deliberate rejection of worldly eloquence and oratorical skill. The Apostle Paul consciously refused to use “wisdom of words” so that the hearer’s faith would rest in the power of God, not in the skill of the man. The Scriptures consistently show that God chooses messengers, such as Moses and Jeremiah, who admit their lack of eloquence to ensure that the message, and not the messenger, receives the glory. Christ warns that universal popularity is a “woe,” a clear sign of a compromised message characteristic of false prophets.

### **Filthy Lucre**

The Scriptures provide a conclusive diagnostic for identifying false teachers: a motive of “filthy lucre,” or greedy, dishonest gain. They are described as covetous individuals who use “feigned words” to “make merchandise” of their followers. The New Testament establishes a non-negotiable standard that true church leaders must be “not greedy of filthy lucre.” Paul’s own example of working a secular trade to support his ministry directly contradicts the modern, post-apostolic system of a professional, salaried clergy, which has no scriptural precedent and instead serves as a clear sign of a compromised ministry.

### **The Elijah Message**



The final message presents a stark choice between two foundations. The first is the “house of man,” a magnificent but ultimately corrupt system built on the sand of human wisdom, traditions, and philosophy. The second is the simple “house of God,” built on the unchanging rock of Jesus Christ and His unadorned Word. The text argues that the coming storm of judgment will expose the foundation of every religious structure, and that only the house built on the Rock will stand. It concludes by urging the reader to forsake all man-made religious systems and return to the simple, direct, and biblical path of faith in Christ alone.

### **A Call to Separation, Not Confrontation**

This analysis provides guidance for those who discover their church's doctrines are unscriptural. It affirms that the scriptural mandate is not to engage in prolonged, confrontational debate with institutional leaders—who are shown to ignore scriptural evidence—but to practice biblical separation. The path forward is to "avoid them" (Romans 16:17) and "reject" the heretical (Titus 3:10), trusting that each person is accountable to God. The true mission is not to reform corrupt systems ("old wineskins") but to "come out" and build a new, scriptural house church, focusing on evangelizing the unchurched ("highways and byways") through simple, KJV-based hospitality..

### **The Gospel of the House Church: Rejecting the “Sinners Prayer”**

The "one true church" is not merely an organizational structure; it is the guardian of the "one true gospel." This chapter exposes the "Sinner's Prayer" as a counterfeit conversion ritual, a "commandment of men" (Matthew 15:9) invented by 19th-century revivalists like Charles Finney. This man-made tradition is "another gospel" (Galatians 1:8) because it "makes the word of God of none effect" (Mark 7:13). It replaces the true apostolic message (the facts of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and the true apostolic response (the commands of Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized... for the remission of sins"). By nullifying the command to be baptized to "wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16), the Sinner's Prayer offers a false assurance of salvation based on a human tradition rather than on apostolic obedience.

### **The Unifying Standard: Why the KJV is the Only "Sword" for the House Church**

This final chapter proves that the participatory house church model is *impossible* to sustain without a single, authoritative text. A meeting where "every one... hath a doctrine" (1 Corinthians 14:26) descends into "Babel" (confusion) if members use conflicting modern versions (NIV, ESV) where key verses (like Acts 8:37 or 1 John 5:7) are missing or changed. This "many versions" model inevitably re-creates the "Rabbi" class, forcing the assembly to appeal to a "scholar" to "fix" the text, thus destroying the "all ye are brethren" model. This chapter affirms the King James Version as the only text for the house church, as it is derived from the providentially preserved "Received Text" (Majority Text), while modern versions are the "leavened" texts of "Babylon" (the corrupt Alexandrian text-type).

### **A Practical Guide to Establishing a Biblical House Church**

This chapter presents a five-step, practical blueprint for restoring the one true church, free from the unbiblical traditions of "Babylon." Step 1 is Separation: "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4). Step 2 is Study: becoming a "Berean" (Acts 17:11) through personal, topical KJV study to de-program from man-made doctrines. Step 3 is Hospitality: obeying the elder's qualification (1 Timothy 3:2) by opening one's home for a "love feast." Step 4 is The Meeting: following the Acts 2:42 pattern of fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, and participatory "apostles' doctrine." Step 5 is Multiplication: recognizing plural, unpaid elders and deacons, and, when the home is full, multiplying by sending out a new assembly rather than building a centralized institution.

### **The Order of Worship: Restoring the Participatory Meeting**

This chapter deconstructs the modern, passive, "sermon-centric" church service as a pagan, Greco-Roman tradition that "quenches the Spirit" and creates a "Rabbi" class (Matthew 23:8). It restores the biblical order of worship, which is based on the participatory synagogue model (Luke 4; Acts 17:2). The apostolic manual for this meeting is 1 Corinthians 14, which commands that "every one of you hath a doctrine" (v. 26). This liberty is protected from heresy not by a one-man monologue, but by the biblical safeguard: plural, qualified elders who "judge" (v. 29) the doctrine being shared, "convincing the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9) and "stopping the mouths" of heretics, thus creating a dynamic, safe, and edifying assembly.

### **The Lord's Supper: Restoring the "Love Feast"**

This chapter exposes the institutional "communion" service—a ritualistic "crumb and a sip"—as a pagan-derived counterfeit that fails the "litmus test" of Scripture. A topical analysis of 1 Corinthians 11 proves the Lord's Supper was a full, communal "supper" where some could be "hungry" and others "drunken." This, combined with Acts 2:46 ("did eat their meat") and Jude 1:12 ("feasts of charity"), reveals the true apostolic pattern is a joyous "Love Feast." The house church restores this by practicing the supper as a shared "potluck dinner," an act of fellowship and charity that is the opposite of Babylon's sterile, individualistic, and spiritually-famished ritual.

### **The Mark of the Disciple: True Fellowship vs. the Institutional Counterfeit**

This chapter analyzes Christ's "new commandment" in John 13:35—to "love one another"—as the single, identifying "mark" of the true church. This love must be "in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18). The institutional model, with its passive, anonymous "sermon" audience, creates "cliques" and "superficial small talk," making true fellowship impossible. It is a "love in word" only. Furthermore, its "tithe" system funds salaries and buildings ("filthy lucre") by stealing from the poor. The house church is the only model structurally *designed* to fulfill this command through intimate, participatory fellowship, a shared "Love Feast," and a financial system where deacons distribute 100% of collections to the poor, thus proving its "love in deed."

## Part V: A Topical Index for the Berean Student

The final section is perhaps the most important, for it is the one that empowers you to become your own master builder. This is the **master blueprint itself**. Here you will find a complete index of every biblical topic discussed in this book, each one followed by a comprehensive list of every relevant verse from the King James Bible. This section contains no commentary, no argument, and no narrative. It is the raw, unadulterated data of the Word of God, organized for your own study. We do not want you to simply trust our conclusions. We want you to take this blueprint, to be like the noble Bereans of Acts 17, and to search the Scriptures daily for yourself to see whether these things are so. This is your tool for a lifetime of building your faith on the inerrant and all-sufficient Word of God.



# Part I: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Summary Answers

## The Foundation: God's Nature and Man's Condition

**Question 1. How does the Bible describe the love of God, and does it present this love as being for all people or only for a select group?**

**Answer 1.** The Bible presents the love of God as a multifaceted attribute, both sovereign and universally offered. Scripture is clear that God's love extends to the entire world, demonstrated most profoundly in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, as stated in John 3:16. This is not a passive, sentimental love, but an active, redemptive love that desires **all men to be saved** and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. While God demonstrates a particular, covenantal love for His chosen people, the elect, this does not negate the broader, compassionate love He holds for all humanity. The universal offer of the gospel and the command to preach it to every creature stand as testaments to this truth. Therefore, to confine God's love only to a select group is to create a false dichotomy. The Bible harmonizes these truths, showing a God whose love is vast enough to provide a genuine, bona fide offer of salvation to every person, even while He works all things according to the counsel of His own will. His love is the very foundation of His mercy and grace, which are extended freely, not coercively.

**Question 2. According to Scripture, what is the extent of God's sovereignty? Does His sovereignty negate human free will and responsibility?**

**Answer 2.** Scripture presents God's sovereignty as absolute and all-encompassing; He works all things after the counsel of His own will and His purpose shall stand. However, the Bible does not present this sovereignty as a force that negates or overrides human responsibility. Instead, it holds two seemingly paradoxical truths in perfect harmony: **God is completely sovereign, and man is completely responsible.** The Bible is replete with commands for mankind to choose, repent, believe, and obey, all of which presuppose a genuine ability to respond. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, "how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" powerfully illustrates this point. God's sovereignty is not the fatalistic determinism of pagan philosophy, where humans are mere puppets. Rather, it is the wise and powerful governance of a Creator who has sovereignly decreed that mankind should have free will. He draws people to Himself, but the call can be resisted. He does not cause sin, but He can use the sinful acts of men to accomplish His ultimate, redemptive purposes, as seen in the crucifixion of Christ.

**Question 3. What does it mean that God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and how does this principle apply to salvation?**

**Answer 3.** The declaration that God is "no respecter of persons" is a foundational biblical principle revealing His absolute impartiality and justice. It means that God does not show favoritism based on external factors such as nationality, social status, wealth, or any other human distinction. In the context of salvation, this is a profound truth. Peter's revelation in Acts 10, upon seeing the Holy Ghost fall upon the Gentile Cornelius and his household, shattered the long-held belief that salvation was exclusive to the Jews. It demonstrates that the path to God is open to **anyone, in any**

**nation**, who fears Him and works righteousness. This principle directly challenges any theological system suggesting that God arbitrarily selects some individuals for salvation while unconditionally passing over others. The gospel invitation is universal, and the terms of acceptance—faith and repentance—are the same for all. God judges righteously, based on a person's response to the light they have been given, not on a pre-ordained, selective decree.

**Question 4. How does the Bible define the "grace of God"? Is it a force that cannot be resisted, or is it an offer that can be accepted or rejected?**

**Answer 4.** The Bible defines the grace of God not as an irresistible metaphysical force, but as the unmerited, benevolent favor of God expressed through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the very foundation of salvation, as Ephesians 2:8 states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Scripture portrays this grace as an active, powerful influence that teaches, redeems, and justifies, but it also clearly indicates that it can be resisted. Stephen directly accused the Sanhedrin of **always resisting the Holy Ghost**, just as their fathers did. Paul warned the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain and cautioned the Galatians about falling from grace. These warnings would be meaningless if grace were an irresistible force. Therefore, grace is a divine, enabling offer. It is the power of God that draws and woos sinners, making salvation possible, but it does not violate the human will that God Himself created. It is a gift that must be received, not a decree that is imposed.

**Question 5. What is the biblical definition of "mercy," and to whom is it extended?**

**Answer 5.** Biblical mercy is God's tender-hearted compassion and forbearance, the act of withholding a just punishment that is deserved. It is intrinsically linked to His love and goodness, which are over all His works. While grace is God giving us a gift we do not deserve (salvation), mercy is God not giving us the punishment we do deserve (damnation). The Bible shows that God's mercy is abundant, plenteous, and everlasting. It is extended broadly to all of creation, but it is specifically and redemptively applied to those who respond to Him in humility and repentance. The Lord is merciful to them that fear Him, to returning backsliders, and to repentant sinners. Crucially, Romans 9:15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," does not teach that God's mercy is arbitrary or limited to a pre-selected few. Rather, it establishes God's sovereign right to **define the terms upon which His mercy is granted**—namely, through faith in Jesus Christ, which is the channel He has ordained for both Jew and Gentile. His mercy is not a contradiction of His justice, but a glorious expression of His loving character.

**Question 6. According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, what were the immediate and long-term consequences of Adam's sin for humanity?**

**Answer 6.** According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, Adam's sin introduced catastrophic and far-reaching consequences for all of humanity. The immediate results were spiritual death (separation from God), shame, and the introduction of a curse upon the natural world. Long-term, Adam's transgression had a twofold effect. First, **death passed upon all men**, both physical and spiritual, as stated in Romans 5:12. All of humanity now inherits a fallen, corruptible nature, prone to sin. Second, all of creation was subjected to bondage and corruption. However, the Bible is precise about what was inherited. We inherit the consequences of Adam's sin—a sinful nature and a fallen

world—but we are not born guilty of Adam's specific act of transgression. Ezekiel 18 makes it clear that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Each person is accountable for their own sin. The "total depravity" taught by some systems, which posits an inability even to respond to God, is an overstatement. Man retains the knowledge of good and evil and a conscience, which the Holy Spirit uses to draw him to the gospel.

**Question 7. Does the Bible teach that humans are born "totally depraved" and incapable of seeking God, or do they possess a conscience and a knowledge of good and evil?**

**Answer 7.** The Bible teaches that humanity is born into a state of sinfulness, but not one of absolute inability or "total depravity" in the sense that they are incapable of responding to God. The doctrine of inherited sin is clear: we are all born with a nature inclined toward evil. However, Genesis 3 reveals that with the fall came the **knowledge of good and evil**. This knowledge, coupled with the conscience described in Romans 2, serves as an internal witness to God's law. Paul argues that even Gentiles, who do not have the written law, "do by nature the things contained in the law," showing that their conscience either accuses or excuses them. This capacity is the very thing the Holy Spirit illuminates and uses to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. If humanity were truly incapable of any positive response, the universal calls to "repent," "choose," and "seek" found throughout Scripture would be a divine mockery. The biblical position is that man is radically corrupt and cannot save himself, but he is not a machine; he retains a moral faculty that God's grace can and does appeal to.

**Question 8. How does the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 challenge the idea that an unregenerate person cannot perform acts that are pleasing to God?**

**Answer 8.** The story of Cornelius in Acts 10 stands as a powerful biblical refutation of the idea that an unregenerate person is utterly incapable of any act that is pleasing to God. Before ever hearing the gospel from Peter, Cornelius is described as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." An angel explicitly tells him that his prayers and his alms have **come up for a memorial before God**. This directly contradicts the notion that every action of an unsaved person is sinful and detestable to God. While Cornelius's good works could not save him—he still needed to hear the words of the gospel and be saved by faith in Christ—they were clearly not disregarded by God. The account demonstrates that a person can possess a genuine fear of God and a responsive heart even before regeneration. It shows that God recognizes and responds to such sincerity, not by granting salvation based on those works, but by graciously providing the very means of salvation—the gospel message—to the one who seeks Him.

**Question 9. What is the purpose of the law of Moses, according to Paul in Galatians and Romans?**

**Answer 9.** According to the Apostle Paul in Galatians and Romans, the primary purpose of the Law of Moses was not to provide a means of salvation, but to serve as a divine "schoolmaster" to lead humanity to Christ. The Law is holy, just, and good, and its function is to **reveal the nature of sin** and to demonstrate humanity's universal guilt before a holy God. By setting a perfect standard that no one could keep, the Law silenced every mouth and proved that "by the deeds of



the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." It was never intended to be a ladder for man to climb to God, but a mirror to show man his desperate need for a savior. Once faith in Christ has come, Paul declares, we are no longer under this schoolmaster. The Law's purpose was temporary and preparatory. It was added "because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made," that seed being Jesus Christ. It diagnoses the disease of sin but offers no cure; it is the gospel of grace that provides the remedy.

**Question 10. If the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), does this refer to spiritual inability or to condemnation and physical death?**

**Answer 10.** The statement "the wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23 refers unequivocally to **condemnation and the resulting physical and spiritual separation from God**, not to a state of spiritual inability that prevents one from believing. The Bible consistently defines death in legal and relational terms. Spiritually, it is separation from the life of God. Physically, it is the cessation of life in this world. Eternally, it is the "second death" in the lake of fire, the ultimate consequence of unforgiven sin. The concept of "total inability" is a philosophical inference read into the text, not the direct teaching of Scripture itself. When the Bible speaks of being "dead in trespasses and sins," it describes a state of condemnation and alienation, not a lack of capacity to respond to a command. A man condemned to death row is legally dead, yet he can still hear and respond to a pardon. Similarly, a sinner is condemned, yet he can hear and respond to the gospel of grace. The wage is a just sentence, not an inherent paralysis of the will.

## **The Gospel and the Atonement**

**Question 11. According to 1 Corinthians 15, what are the essential components of the Gospel message that Paul preached?**

**Answer 11.** According to 1 Corinthians 15, the Gospel message that Paul preached, and which he received directly, consists of three core, non-negotiable, historical facts. First, **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**. This was not a random tragedy but the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, a substitutionary sacrifice to atone for sin. Second, **he was buried**. This is a crucial, yet often overlooked, component that verifies the reality of His death. A phantom does not need a tomb. His burial confirms He was truly dead, making the subsequent event all the more miraculous. Third, **he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**. This is the pinnacle of the Gospel, the ultimate proof of His deity and the victory over sin and death. These three elements—the death, burial, and resurrection—form the irreducible core of the good news. This is the message "by which also ye are saved," and any message that omits or alters these foundational pillars is, according to Paul, "another gospel."

**Question 12. How do the "whosoever" passages in the Bible (e.g., John 3:16, Romans 10:13) inform our understanding of the scope of the Gospel invitation?**

**Answer 12.** The "whosoever" passages in the Bible are a divine declaration of the **unlimited and universal scope of the Gospel invitation**. Phrases like "whosoever believeth in him" in John 3:16 and "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" in Romans 10:13 are

intentionally broad and unrestricted. They stand in direct opposition to any theological system that seeks to limit the offer of salvation to a pre-selected, exclusive group. The word "whosoever" demolishes the man-made walls of particular redemption. It means exactly what it says: any person, from any background, without exception, who meets the condition of faith, is eligible for salvation. These verses are not a divine slip of the tongue or a misleading advertisement for a product available only to a few. They are the sincere, bona fide offer of a loving God who "will have all men to be saved." They inform us that the gate to salvation is narrow, requiring faith and repentance, but it is open to anyone who desires to enter.

**Question 13. What is the meaning of Christ's death being a "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)?**

**Answer 13.** The statement in 1 John 2:2 is one of the clearest affirmations in Scripture of the **unlimited extent of Christ's atonement**. The term "propitiation" refers to the turning away of wrath by an offering; Christ's sacrifice satisfied the just demands of a holy God against sin. John, writing to believers, makes a crucial distinction. He says Christ is the propitiation for "our" sins (the sins of believers), but then immediately expands the scope: "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This addition is unambiguous and intentional, designed to prevent any misunderstanding that Christ's death was limited in its sufficiency. It is a death powerful enough to save every single person. While the benefits of the atonement are only applied to those who believe, its provision was made for all humanity. This verse single-handedly dismantles the doctrine of a limited atonement, proving that Christ's death was sufficient for all, even if it is only efficient for those who exercise faith.

**Question 14. How does the command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) align with the doctrine of a limited atonement?**

**Answer 14.** The Great Commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" is fundamentally incompatible with the doctrine of a limited atonement. If Christ's death was intended only for a select group of elect, then the universal command to preach becomes a problematic, if not deceptive, exercise. How can one make a sincere, universal offer of a salvation that was never universally provided? It would mean missionaries are commanded to offer a free gift that, for the vast majority of their hearers, does not actually exist. This turns the gospel invitation into a hollow gesture. The biblical mandate, however, presupposes a genuine opportunity for **every creature to be saved**. The command is universal because the provision is universal. Christ's atonement is sufficient for all, which is why the offer can be genuinely made to all. The doctrine of limited atonement creates an irreconcilable tension with the church's marching orders, forcing its adherents into logical gymnastics to explain how a limited provision can be the basis for an unlimited call.

**Question 15. If Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect, what is the purpose of the universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture?**

**Answer 15.** The universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture serve as powerful evidence against the notion that Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect. God's command in Acts 17:30 that all men everywhere should repent would be insincere if the majority of those men had no possibility of being saved because no atonement was made for them. Why

command a man to turn from his sin and flee to a savior who did not die for him? It would be like telling a starving man to go to a banquet that was prepared only for a select few. The universal call to repent implies a **universal provision of grace and a universal opportunity for forgiveness**. God's commands are not a divine charade. They are genuine invitations rooted in the reality that "God our Saviour... will have all men to be saved." The calls to repentance are purposeful because Christ's death was sufficient for all, making forgiveness available to anyone who turns from their sin and believes the gospel.

**Question 16. What does it mean that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)?**

**Answer 16.** The declaration in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God "will have all men to be saved" is a clear statement of **God's universal, benevolent desire for the salvation of all humanity**. This verse reveals the heart of God. His desire is not for the destruction of the wicked, but for their redemption. The word "will" in this context speaks to His desire, His wish, His benevolent disposition, not to an irresistible, deterministic decree that ensures every person will, in fact, be saved. The Bible makes it clear that not all will be saved, because many will reject God's gracious offer. This verse, therefore, stands in stark opposition to any theology that posits God unconditionally and eternally decreed for the majority of humanity to be damned. It must be harmonized with other scriptures that show man's ability to resist God's will. God's desire is for all to be saved, and He made this possible through the death of Christ, who is the "ransom for all." The responsibility for accepting or rejecting this salvation rests with each individual.

**Question 17. How does the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) illustrate the nature of God's call and human response?**

**Answer 17.** The parable of the great supper in Luke 14 provides a vivid illustration of the nature of God's call and the reality of human response. It shows, first, that the initial invitation is genuine and generous. The master of the house prepared a great feast and invited many, symbolizing God's initial covenant call to the nation of Israel. However, the parable then demonstrates that **the call can be, and often is, rejected**. Those who were first invited made excuses, prioritizing worldly concerns over the master's invitation. This illustrates human responsibility and the ability to refuse God's gracious offer. In response to this rejection, the master's call is then extended outward, to the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" and to those in the "highways and hedges." This represents the gospel going out to the Gentiles and the outcasts. The parable powerfully refutes the idea of an irresistible call, as the first group clearly resisted. It shows a God who desires His house to be full and extends His invitation broadly when the initial guests prove themselves unworthy.

**Question 18. What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel message?**

**Answer 18.** The relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel is an inseparable, sequential bond. **Hearing the Gospel is the necessary catalyst** for both faith and repentance. As Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Gospel message—the news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for our sins—is the power of



God unto salvation. When this message is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit works to convict the hearer of their sin and their need for a savior. In response to this divine initiative, the individual must exercise faith—a trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ—and repentance—a turning away from sin and toward God. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin of conversion. They are not separate works but a unified response to the truth of the Gospel. One cannot truly believe in Christ without turning from sin, and one cannot truly repent without placing their faith in Christ.

**Question 19. Can a person be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel?**

**Answer 19.** The Bible teaches that regeneration, or being "born again," is intrinsically linked to hearing and believing the Gospel message and cannot occur before it. The apostle Peter states that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever." James 1:18 echoes this: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Regeneration is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, but He performs this work in conjunction with the proclamation of the Gospel. The Word of God is the instrument the Spirit uses to impart new life. To suggest that regeneration precedes faith is to put the cart before the horse. It would mean God makes a person alive spiritually, and then that person believes. The biblical order, however, is clear: a person hears the Gospel, the Spirit convicts them, they respond in faith and repentance, and at that moment, they are regenerated and sealed by the Spirit. The idea of regeneration before hearing the gospel has no scriptural support and is a philosophical construct designed to support the doctrine of irresistible grace.

**Question 20. How does the Bible define "justification," and is it a one-time declaration or a lifelong process?**

**Answer 20.** The Bible defines justification as a **one-time, instantaneous legal declaration** by God, not a lifelong process of becoming righteous. It is a forensic act, taking place in the courtroom of heaven, where God, as the righteous judge, declares a believing sinner to be righteous in His sight. This declaration is not based on any inherent goodness or future potential in the person, but solely on the basis of their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through faith, the perfect righteousness of Christ is "imputed," or credited, to the believer's account, while the believer's sin was imputed to Christ on the cross. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The use of the past tense ("being justified") indicates a completed action. Conflating justification with bearing fruit (our ongoing growth in following Christ) is a critical error that undermines the assurance of salvation. Justification is the foundation, a past-tense reality for every true believer, upon which the Christian life is built.

## **Election and Predestination**

**Question 21. When the New Testament uses the term "elect," is it referring to specific individuals chosen for salvation from eternity, or to the nation of Israel and, by extension, the church?**

**Answer 21.** When the New Testament uses the term "elect," it is crucial to examine the context, as it does not carry a single, monolithic meaning. Primarily, in the Gospels and much of Romans, the term refers specifically to the **nation of Israel**, God's chosen people under the Old Covenant. Jesus spoke of shortening the days of tribulation "for the elect's sake," referring to the Jews in Judea. However, with the establishment of the New Covenant, the meaning expands. The church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ, becomes the new "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation." Therefore, election is corporate as well as individual. God chose a people for Himself—first Israel, now the church. The error of some theological systems is to read a post-Reformation definition of individual, unconditional election for salvation back into every biblical use of the word, ignoring the primary context of national, covenantal election that defines its meaning in so many key passages.

**Question 22. How does the context of Romans 9, which focuses on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, affect the interpretation of election?**

**Answer 22.** The broader context of Romans 9, which is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, is absolutely critical to its correct interpretation and fundamentally reframes the discussion of election. The chapter is not an abstract treatise on God's eternal, unconditional decree to save or damn individuals. Rather, it is Paul's answer to a pressing question: Has God's promise to Israel failed, now that the Gospel is going to the Gentiles? Paul's argument is that God's purpose was never based on physical lineage ("they are not all Israel, which are of Israel") but on His sovereign choice to fulfill His promise. He uses the examples of Jacob and Esau, and Pharaoh, not to teach individual predestination to heaven or hell, but to illustrate God's sovereign right to choose the **vehicles through which His redemptive plan unfolds in history**. The hardening of some in Israel and the calling of the Gentiles were part of this plan to create one new man in Christ. To lift verses out of this context is to distort Paul's entire argument, turning a discussion about God's historical, redemptive purposes into a blueprint for fatalism.

**Question 23. What was John the Baptist's warning to the "elect" nation of Israel in Matthew 3, and what does it imply about the security of the elect?**

**Answer 23.** John the Baptist's warning to the religious leaders of Israel—the "elect" nation—in Matthew 3 serves as a devastating refutation of the idea of unconditional security. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, he did not affirm their elect status. Instead, he called them a "generation of vipers" and warned them not to presume safety based on their lineage, saying, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." His most pointed statement was, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." This implies that **election is not an unconditional guarantee of salvation**. Even the chosen branches of the national tree of Israel could be cut off if they did not bear the fruit of repentance. This directly contradicts the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which claims that the truly elect cannot fall away. John's message establishes that a privileged position does not equal a permanent one; it must be accompanied by genuine, fruit-bearing faith.

**Question 24. According to Ephesians 1, what are believers predestined to? Is it salvation itself, or adoption and conformity to Christ's image?**

**Answer 24.** A careful reading of Ephesians 1 reveals that believers are predestined not to salvation itself in a deterministic sense, but to the **glorious inheritance and position** that comes with salvation. The text says God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." The purpose of this predestination is our ongoing growth in following Christ ("that we should be holy") and our familial relationship with God ("adoption of children"). Similarly, Romans 8:29 states that those whom God foreknew, He "also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The focus of predestination is the ultimate goal for those who are "in him"—their final, glorified state. It is God's eternal plan for what believers will become, not an eternal decree that irresistibly causes belief in the first place. It is the destination God has planned for all who get on the train of faith, not a decree that forces certain people onto the train.

**Question 25. How does the doctrine of God's foreknowledge (Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2) relate to the concept of election?**

**Answer 25.** The doctrine of God's foreknowledge is explicitly and inextricably linked to the concept of election in Scripture. It is not that God elects individuals and therefore foreknows they will be saved; rather, the Bible presents the reverse order. Romans 8:29 states, "For whom he did **foreknow**, he also did predestinate..." and 1 Peter 1:2 addresses believers as "Elect according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father." This means that God, in His omniscience, existing outside of time, knew from eternity past who would freely respond to His gracious offer of salvation in Christ. Election, therefore, is not an arbitrary or unconditional choice. It is God's choice of those whom He knew would choose Him. This does not undermine God's sovereignty; it magnifies it. His sovereign plan was to create beings with free will and to elect, or choose, to save all who would place their faith in His Son. Foreknowledge does not cause the event, any more than a meteorologist's forecast causes a storm. God simply knows the end from the beginning.

**Question 26. If election is unconditional, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance?**

**Answer 26.** The Bible's overwhelming emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance stands as a significant challenge to the doctrine of unconditional election. Scripture is filled with commands and invitations that are explicitly conditional. "He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). These are not suggestions; they are the divinely appointed requirements for receiving salvation. If election were truly unconditional, these conditions would be rendered largely meaningless—a mere script for humans to act out after their fate has already been irresistibly determined. Why would God command all men everywhere to repent if only a select few are unconditionally chosen and enabled to do so? The presence of these conditions throughout the Bible strongly implies that **human response is a genuine and necessary part of the salvation equation**. God has sovereignly decreed that the condition for entering His kingdom is faith, a condition that His grace enables, but which each individual must personally fulfill.

**Question 27. What is the "Book of Life," and what does the possibility of names being "blotted out" (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5) suggest about unconditional election?**



**Answer 27.** The Book of Life is a heavenly record, mentioned throughout Scripture, containing the names of those who are heirs of eternal life. The most profound insight into its nature is that names are not added at conversion, but can be **blotted out**. In Exodus 32, Moses intercedes for sinful Israel, and God responds, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." In Revelation 3, Christ promises the overcomer, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." This possibility of removal is utterly incompatible with the doctrine of unconditional election and eternal security. If a name can be removed, then the person's standing was conditional. The biblical teaching suggests that God, in His foreknowledge and love, inscribed all of humanity in His book from the foundation of the world, based on the provision of the Lamb slain. However, through unrepentant sin and unbelief, individuals can forfeit their place, leading to their names being blotted out. This harmonizes God's universal love with individual responsibility.

**Question 28. How does the grafting of the Gentiles into the olive tree in Romans 11 illustrate the nature of election and the possibility of being "cut off"?**

**Answer 28.** The analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11 is one of the most powerful illustrations of conditional election in all of Scripture. The natural branches, representing the nation of Israel (the original "elect"), were **broken off because of unbelief**. The wild olive branches, representing the Gentiles, were grafted in contrary to nature, not because of an unconditional decree, but "by faith." Paul then issues a stark warning to the newly grafted-in Gentile believers: "Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." He explicitly states that they stand by faith and can be "cut off" if they do not continue in His goodness. This passage demolishes the idea of an unconditional, irrevocable election. It shows that one's position in the covenant tree is maintained by faith and that even those who are "in" can be removed. It perfectly illustrates that election is a call to a privileged position that requires a continuing response of faith to maintain.

**Question 29. What does it mean that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)?**

**Answer 29.** The statement "many are called, but few are chosen," found at the conclusion of the parable of the wedding feast, distinguishes between the universal nature of the gospel invitation and the particular nature of the final remnant who accept it. The "call" is the broad, external proclamation of the gospel, which goes out to many. In the parable, the invitation was extended to all, both "bad and good." This represents the universal offer of salvation. The "chosen," however, are those who not only accept the invitation but also meet the conditions of the king. In the parable, this is represented by the man who was cast out for not having a wedding garment, symbolizing the righteousness of Christ that is received by faith. Therefore, the verse does not teach that God only calls a few. It teaches that **the call goes out to many, but only a few respond appropriately** with genuine, saving faith. The choice, in this context, is not an arbitrary, pre-temporal decree by God, but a description of the final group who are deemed worthy because they have embraced the king's provision.

**Question 30. How can we reconcile the verses on God's sovereign choice with the verses that emphasize human responsibility to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15)?**

**Answer 30.** The reconciliation of God's sovereign choice and human responsibility is found not in philosophical systems that try to eliminate one in favor of the other, but in accepting the Bible's full testimony. The key is understanding that **God sovereignly decreed that man should have a will with which to choose.** The command in Joshua, "choose you this day whom ye will serve," is a genuine command requiring a genuine choice. It is not a charade. God's sovereignty is not compromised by this; it is magnified. He is so sovereign that He can create beings with the freedom to accept or reject Him, and still accomplish His ultimate purposes. The Bible does not present these as contradictory but as complementary truths. God initiates, draws, and enables through His grace ("No man can come to me, except the Father...draw him"). Man responds to that initiative by choosing, believing, and repenting. The error is to create a false dilemma, forcing an "either-or" choice between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, when the Bible consistently upholds both.

## **The Will of Man and the Grace of God**

**Question 31. Does the Bible teach that the human will is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace?**

**Answer 31.** The Bible teaches that the human will is fallen, corrupted by sin, and in bondage, but not that it is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace. Scripture affirms that without divine initiative, no one would seek God. However, it also consistently issues commands and invitations that presuppose the ability to respond. Jesus's words, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40), place the responsibility for rejection squarely on the human will, not on an inherent inability. The problem is not a lack of capacity, but a lack of desire—a love for darkness rather than light. God's grace, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the hearing of the Word, **enlightens the mind and persuades the will**, making a positive response possible. The will is not coerced or bypassed; it is wooed and enabled. The idea of a will so completely bound that it cannot even respond to God's drawing is a philosophical concept of determinism, not a direct teaching of the biblical text.

**Question 32. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ (John 6:44), and is this drawing irresistible?**

**Answer 32.** The role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ is essential and initiatory. Jesus states in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." This "drawing" is the divine work of the Spirit, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and illuminating the truth of the Gospel. It is the necessary prerequisite for salvation. However, the Bible does not portray this drawing as an irresistible, coercive force. The Greek word for "draw" (*helkuo*) can mean to drag, but it is also used for drawing in a net, which contains both good and bad fish, implying a non-discriminatory drawing. More importantly, Stephen's accusation in Acts 7:51, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**," proves that the Spirit's influence can be resisted. Jesus's lament over Jerusalem confirms this. Therefore, the Spirit's drawing is a powerful, persuasive, and enabling call that makes salvation possible, but it is not a force that violates human volition.

**Question 33. How do the repeated invitations to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" in Scripture imply a capacity for human response?**

**Answer 33.** The repeated, earnest invitations from God to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" are one of the strongest biblical arguments for the human capacity to respond to grace. These are not rhetorical flourishes; they are genuine commands and offers from God to mankind. The final invitation of the Bible in Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," is a perfect summary. The command to "ask" for what you do not have, to "seek" what you have lost, and to "knock" on a door that is closed to you inherently implies that the person being addressed **has the ability to perform these actions**. If the human will were completely passive and unable to respond until irresistibly regenerated, these invitations would be nonsensical. They are addressed to the needy and the lost, presupposing that upon hearing the call, they can, by God's enabling grace, make a choice to respond.

**Question 34. What does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem—"how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37)—reveal about the resistibility of God's will?**

**Answer 34.** Jesus's heartfelt lament over Jerusalem is a poignant and definitive statement on the resistibility of God's will. In this passage, the divine will is clearly expressed: "how often would I have gathered thy children together." This is the stated desire of God. Yet, the outcome is equally clear: "and ye would not!" This places the reason for their failure to be gathered not on a secret, decretive will of God ordaining their rejection, but squarely on their own rebellious will. It reveals a God who genuinely desires the salvation of those who are ultimately lost and who does not coerce the objects of His love. The passage presents two wills in conflict: **God's will to save and man's will to reject**. In this instance, man's will prevailed, not because it was more powerful, but because God, in His sovereignty, allows for such resistance. This single verse poses an insurmountable problem for any system that teaches that God's saving grace is irresistible.

**Question 35. Is the faith that leads to salvation a gift from God that is irresistibly applied, or is it a human response to God's gracious initiative?**

**Answer 35.** The Bible presents faith as both a gift of God and a required human response, a truth that must be held in harmony. Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved "by grace... through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The "gift" in this passage refers to the entire package of salvation, which is initiated and made possible by God's grace. Faith itself is also enabled by God; it "cometh by hearing... the word of God," and the Holy Spirit convicts and draws. However, the act of believing is consistently portrayed as a **human response to this divine initiative**. Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." The jailer in Acts was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The idea that faith is a gift that is irresistibly applied to a passive recipient is not supported by the text. Rather, God graciously provides the opportunity, the evidence, and the enabling power to believe, but the individual must personally exercise that faith.



**Question 36. If grace is irresistible, why does the Bible contain warnings against resisting the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51) and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1)?**

**Answer 36.** The explicit biblical warnings against resisting the Holy Spirit and receiving God's grace in vain are logically incompatible with the doctrine of irresistible grace. These warnings would be entirely superfluous and deceptive if such resistance were impossible for the elect. In Acts 7:51, Stephen's condemnation of the Jewish leaders, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," is presented as a real and culpable action. He is not accusing them of attempting the impossible. Similarly, Paul's plea to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," presupposes two possibilities: **receiving grace for salvation or receiving it in vain, meaning to no effect.** If grace were irresistible, no one to whom it was extended could possibly receive it in vain. These passages demonstrate that God's gracious call can be opposed and His offer can be squandered, confirming that while grace is powerful and persuasive, it is not coercive.

**Question 37. What is the "effectual call," and is there a biblical basis for a special, internal call that is different from the general, external call of the Gospel?**

**Answer 37.** The concept of an "effectual call"—a special, internal, and irresistible call extended only to the elect, which is distinct from the general, external call of the gospel—is a **theological construct, not a direct biblical teaching.** It was developed within systematic theology to resolve the tension created by the fact that the Bible issues a universal call, yet not all respond. The Bible speaks of one call: the gospel invitation. This call is made "effectual" or effective in a person's life when they respond to it with faith and repentance. It is not that there are two different types of calls being sent out by God. Rather, there is one call that produces two different results based on the human response. The call itself has the power to save, but it only saves those who embrace it. The idea of a secret, selective call is an unnecessary invention that complicates the straightforward gospel message and has no explicit basis in the text.

**Question 38. How does the concept of "hardening" the heart, as seen with Pharaoh and Israel, work in the Bible? Is it an active work of God or a consequence of human rebellion?**

**Answer 38.** The biblical concept of God "hardening" a heart is best understood not as God actively creating evil or unbelief in a person, but as a **judicial act of giving a person over to their own rebellion.** The case of Pharaoh is the primary example. The text says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This is not a contradiction. Pharaoh repeatedly and defiantly set his will against God's command. In response to this persistent rebellion, God confirmed and solidified the hardness that was already present. It is an act of judgment where God withdraws His restraining grace and allows a person's own sinful desires to run their full course. The same principle applies to Israel. In Romans 1, Paul describes God "giving them up" to their lusts and a "reprobate mind" after they refused to glorify Him. God does not infuse evil; He removes His hand of mercy from those who persistently push it away, thereby strengthening them in the rebellious path they have already chosen.

**Question 39. If a person cannot respond to God without irresistible grace, how can they be held accountable for their unbelief?**

**Answer 39.** The question of accountability is a severe logical and moral problem for the doctrine of irresistible grace. If a person is created with a nature that is utterly unable to believe, and if the grace required to overcome this inability is unconditionally withheld from them, then holding them accountable for their unbelief becomes a **profound injustice**. How can a person be justly condemned for failing to do something they were never able to do? The Bible, however, consistently holds people accountable for their unbelief. Jesus rebuked cities "because they repented not." John 3:19 states that the condemnation is that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The reason for condemnation is a moral choice—a love of darkness—not a metaphysical inability. Biblical accountability rests on the premise that God gives sufficient light and grace for a person to be held responsible for their response. Without this, judgment becomes arbitrary and God's character is maligned.

**Question 40. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to believe?**

**Answer 40.** The relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation is a divine paradox that must be accepted as the Bible presents it, not a contradiction to be solved by human philosophy. The Bible affirms both truths with equal force. God is absolutely sovereign; salvation is "of the Lord." He initiates, He draws, He regenerates, He keeps. Without His sovereign grace, no one would be saved. At the same time, man is fully responsible to respond to that grace. The command to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is a real command requiring a real response. **God's sovereignty does not cancel man's responsibility; it establishes it.** He sovereignly created man as a moral agent and sovereignly decreed that faith would be the means of salvation. The two truths are not at odds but work in perfect harmony. God's grace enables the will, and the will responds to God's grace. To elevate one truth to the exclusion of the other is to distort the biblical message and create a theological system that is out of balance.

## **The Perseverance and Security of the Believer**

**Question 41. Does the Bible teach that once a person is saved, they are always saved, regardless of their subsequent actions?**

**Answer 41.** The Bible does not teach that a person, once saved, is eternally secure regardless of their subsequent actions. This idea, often summarized as "once saved, always saved," is a dangerous distortion of biblical truth. While Scripture gives powerful assurances of God's keeping power for those who abide in Christ, it is equally filled with stark warnings about the possibility of falling away. The security of the believer is **conditional upon continuing in faith and obedience**. Jesus Himself warned that branches in Him that do not bear fruit will be cut off. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and then fall away, for whom it is impossible to be renewed to repentance. The promise of salvation is secure, but our participation in that promise is contingent on our perseverance. To teach that a person can profess faith, live a life of unrepentant sin, and still be secure in their salvation is to offer a false hope that has no foundation in the Word of God.

**Question 42. What are the biblical conditions for final salvation, as outlined in passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14?**

**Answer 42.** Passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14 make it explicitly clear that final salvation is conditional upon the believer's perseverance in faith. In Colossians, Paul states that Christ will present believers holy and unblameable "if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." The word "if" establishes a clear condition. Similarly, Hebrews 3:14 declares, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." These verses, and many others like them, teach that **endurance is the necessary evidence of genuine, saving faith**. This is not salvation by works, but the understanding that the kind of faith that saves is a faith that lasts. The promise is not to those who make a one-time decision, but to "he that shall endure unto the end." Therefore, the biblical condition for final salvation is a living, abiding, and persevering faith in Jesus Christ.

**Question 43. How do the numerous warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" apply to genuine believers?**

**Answer 43.** The numerous and severe warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" must be applied to genuine believers, for they would be meaningless if addressed to anyone else. Warning an unbeliever not to fall away from a faith they never had is nonsensical. These warnings are given to the church, to those who have been "grafted in" and have "tasted the good word of God." The book of Hebrews, in particular, is filled with such admonitions, warning believers not to harden their hearts, not to have an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," and not to "sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." These are not mere hypothetical scenarios. They are **real dangers for real believers**. To reinterpret these passages as applying only to false professors or those who were never truly saved is to twist the plain meaning of the text to fit a preconceived theological system. The Bible takes the threat of apostasy seriously, and so should we.

**Question 44. What does it mean to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) if salvation is already unconditionally guaranteed?**

**Answer 44.** The command in 2 Peter 1:10 to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" is fundamentally at odds with the idea that salvation is unconditionally guaranteed. If a believer's eternal destiny were already fixed by an irrevocable decree, there would be nothing to "make sure." The command would be redundant. The context of the passage is a call to spiritual growth, urging believers to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Peter states that "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." This shows that assurance is not something to be passively assumed, but **actively confirmed through a life of faith and fruitfulness**. Making our calling and election sure is the process of demonstrating the reality of our profession through our conduct. It is by walking in the light that we have fellowship with God and the assurance that we are His. The command presupposes that neglect can lead to falling, making diligence a vital component of the Christian life.

**Question 45. Who are the "overcomers" in the book of Revelation, and what does their struggle imply about the Christian life?**



**Answer 45.** The "overcomers" in the book of Revelation are the true, persevering saints who maintain their faith in Jesus Christ and their testimony in the face of intense persecution, temptation, and deception. The promises to the seven churches are all directed specifically to "him that overcometh." They will eat of the tree of life, receive a crown of life, be clothed in white raiment, and have their names confessed before the Father. The very concept of "overcoming" implies a **real and arduous struggle**. It is not a guaranteed outcome for all who profess faith, but a victory won by those who endure to the end. Revelation 12:11 reveals how they overcome: "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Their security is not in an unconditional decree, but in their active reliance on Christ's sacrifice and their unwavering commitment to His truth, even to the point of martyrdom. The Christian life is a battlefield, not a playground, and only those who fight the good fight of faith will receive the victor's crown.

**Question 46. How does the parable of the sower (Matthew 13) illustrate the different responses to the Gospel and the possibility of falling away?**

**Answer 46.** The parable of the sower in Matthew 13 is a masterful illustration of the different initial responses to the Gospel and the stark reality that not all who begin well will endure. Of the four types of soil that receive the seed of the Word, only one produces lasting fruit. The other three represent those who fall away. The wayside hearer has the word snatched away immediately. The stony ground represents a person who receives the word with joy, showing an initial, genuine response, but **when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended** and falls away. The thorny ground represents one who also receives the word, but "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." This parable powerfully demonstrates that an initial profession of faith is not a guarantee of final salvation. It shows that real conversion is evidenced not by a fleeting emotional response, but by a faith that takes deep root and perseveres through trials to bear fruit.

**Question 47. What is the nature of the "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, and what happens to branches that do not bear fruit (John 15)?**

**Answer 47.** The "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, as described in John 15 and elsewhere, is the outward evidence of a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. It includes both character (the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc.) and conduct (good works and leading others to Christ). This fruit is the natural result of abiding in Christ, the true vine. However, Jesus gives a sobering warning in John 15:2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." This is a direct statement made to His disciples, indicating that a fruitless connection to Christ is not a permanent one. The branch is "in him," signifying a real connection, not a false profession. Yet, **if it fails to bear fruit, it is subject to removal and judgment**. This passage is a strong refutation of the idea that all who are once "in Christ" are eternally secure regardless of their life's testimony. It teaches that a living, vital, fruit-bearing relationship is the condition for remaining in the vine.

**Question 48. How does the teaching of Ezekiel 18 and 33, where a righteous man can turn from his righteousness and die in his sin, inform the doctrine of perseverance?**

**Answer 48.** The teaching in Ezekiel 18 and 33 provides a clear Old Testament foundation for the doctrine of conditional security and serves as a powerful corrective to the idea of unconditional perseverance. God states with unambiguous clarity: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity... all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." This principle of **individual, final accountability** directly informs our understanding of perseverance. It establishes that a person's ultimate standing before God is based on their state at the end of their life, not on a past period of righteousness. While the New Covenant operates on the basis of grace through faith, the principle of falling from a state of righteousness remains. The warnings in Hebrews and elsewhere in the New Testament echo this theme. Ezekiel shows that God has always judged based on a person's final spiritual condition, a principle that undermines any doctrine of guaranteed perseverance.

**Question 49. What is the "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16, and does it have implications for the security of the believer?**

**Answer 49.** The "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16 refers to a state of willful, persistent, and unrepentant sin committed by someone who was once a believer. John distinguishes between "sin which is not unto death," for which believers should pray for one another, and this more grievous "sin unto death." While the exact nature of the sin is not specified, the context suggests it is a deliberate turning away from the truth, a state of apostasy from which there is no repentance. This has profound implications for the security of the believer. It clearly indicates that a person can reach a point of no return, a state of sin so hardened that it leads to spiritual death and the forfeiture of salvation. The existence of such a sin proves that **the believer's security is not unconditional**. It is a solemn warning that continued, willful sin can sever one's relationship with God and lead to ultimate destruction, a reality that contradicts the notion that a true believer can never finally fall away.

**Question 50. How do we reconcile the promises of God's keeping power (John 10:28-29) with the warnings against apostasy?**

**Answer 50.** The promises of God's keeping power and the warnings against apostasy are reconciled by understanding that God's power keeps those who **remain in a state of faith**. In John 10:28-29, Jesus promises, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This is a glorious promise of security. However, the promise is made to "my sheep," who are defined in the preceding verse as those who "hear my voice... and they follow me." The keeping power of God is not an unconditional, mechanical force that prevents a believer from choosing to walk away. It is a powerful preservation for those who continue to hear and follow the Shepherd. The warnings against apostasy are addressed to those same sheep, cautioning them against the real danger of ceasing to follow. Therefore, there is no contradiction. God's hand is powerful enough to hold any who wish to be held, but it will not hold by force one who is determined to leave. Security is in Christ, and we remain secure as we abide in Him.

## The Logical and Moral Implications of Calvinism

**Question 51. If God has unconditionally predestined some to salvation and others to damnation, can He be considered the author of sin?**

**Answer 51.** If God has unconditionally and eternally predestined every event, including the fall of man and every subsequent sinful act, then the conclusion that He is the author of sin becomes logically inescapable. A system of absolute determinism, where every choice and action is merely the outworking of a divine decree, removes secondary causation and places the ultimate responsibility for all things, including evil, squarely on God. To say that God decrees a sinful act but is not culpable for it is a philosophical shell game. If a man builds a machine, programs it to perform a destructive act, and sets it in motion, who is responsible for the destruction? Is it the machine, or the man who programmed it? The Bible, in contrast, presents a God who is holy, who tempts no man, and in whom there is no darkness at all. He permits sin, and can even use it for His redemptive purposes, but **He never causes or decrees it**. To make God the author of sin is to malign His character and contradict the plain testimony of Scripture, which places the responsibility for sin on the free choices of His creatures.

**Question 52. How does the doctrine of unconditional reprobation affect our understanding of God's justice and fairness?**

**Answer 52.** The doctrine of unconditional reprobation—the idea that God, from eternity, decreed to create certain individuals for the sole purpose of damning them, without any regard to their choices—presents a grave challenge to the biblical understanding of God's justice and fairness. It portrays God as a celestial tyrant who condemns creatures for a fate He Himself ordained. This is not the justice of the Bible, which judges men "according to their works" and holds them accountable for their own rebellion. Biblical justice is rooted in righteousness and impartiality. How can it be just to punish a person for being what they were unalterably decreed to be? It turns the final judgment into a mere formality, the execution of a sentence passed before the defendant even existed. This view is a caricature of divine justice, making God seem more like the capricious deities of pagan mythology than the righteous Judge of all the earth who will, by definition, **do what is right**.

**Question 53. If a person's eternal destiny is fixed, what is the purpose of the final judgment according to works?**

**Answer 53.** If a person's eternal destiny is immutably fixed by an unconditional, pre-temporal decree, the final judgment according to works is rendered a **theatrical and largely pointless exercise**. The Bible states clearly that all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body. This judgment is presented as a genuine assessment, where the books are opened and men are judged based on what is written in them. However, if the verdict of "saved" or "damned" was determined before the foundation of the world, then the works are not the basis for the judgment, but merely the evidence of the pre-ordained decree. The judgment becomes a public demonstration rather than a true reckoning. It loses its gravity and its function as a moment of ultimate accountability. The biblical portrayal, however, is of a real judgment



where works are the evidence of a person's true faith or lack thereof, which in turn determines their just reward or punishment.

**Question 54. How does the doctrine of limited atonement impact the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel?**

**Answer 54.** The doctrine of limited atonement directly undermines the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel. If Christ died only for the elect, then the "whosoever will" invitations of the Bible become a profound and troubling paradox. It means God commands His servants to make a universal offer of a salvation that is not universally available. It is like a king offering a pardon to every prisoner in a dungeon, while knowing full well that the pardon was only written for a select few. How can such an offer be considered genuine or sincere? The Bible, however, presents a God who takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" and who earnestly pleads with sinners to turn and live. The sincerity of the gospel offer requires a **corresponding sincerity in its provision**. Christ's death was sufficient for all, which is why the invitation can be honestly extended to all. Limited atonement creates a God who speaks with a forked tongue, offering a salvation with one hand that He has withheld with the other.

**Question 55. If all things are decreed by God, does this render prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace unnecessary?**

**Answer 55.** While adherents of deterministic systems would argue otherwise, the logical conclusion of a belief that all things are unalterably decreed by God is that prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace are rendered largely superfluous. If the number and identity of the elect are fixed and their salvation is irresistibly secured, then why evangelize? The elect will be saved regardless, and the non-elect cannot be saved. Why pray for the salvation of the lost if their fate is already sealed? Why strive for holiness if our ongoing growth in following Christ is an inevitable process? While theologians may create complex systems to justify these activities, the **motivational force behind them is severely weakened**. The Bible, in contrast, presents these means of grace as vital and effective. Paul travailed for souls to be saved. James says the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." These actions are presented as genuinely changing outcomes, a view that is difficult to reconcile with a universe where every outcome is already set in stone.

**Question 56. How does the Calvinistic system address the problem of evil and suffering in the world?**

**Answer 56.** The Calvinistic system addresses the problem of evil and suffering by subsuming it under the umbrella of God's all-encompassing, sovereign decree. In this view, evil and suffering do not exist outside of God's will, but are ordained by Him for His ultimate glory and the greater good. While this provides a comprehensive answer, it does so at a great cost: it makes God the ultimate author of evil. To say that God decreed the fall, and every subsequent act of sin and suffering, is to attribute to Him the very things His nature abhors. The Bible, conversely, presents a God who is holy and separate from sin. It attributes evil to the rebellious choices of created beings, both angelic and human. While God is sovereign over evil, able to limit it and use it for His purposes (as with Joseph's brothers or the crucifixion), **He is never its originator**. The

Calvinistic solution, while logically tidy, paints a picture of God that is morally troubling and difficult to reconcile with the God of love and light revealed in Jesus Christ.

**Question 57. Does the doctrine of unconditional election foster humility or a sense of spiritual elitism?**

**Answer 57.** While proponents argue that the doctrine of unconditional election should foster humility, its practical and psychological tendency is often toward a sense of **spiritual elitism**. The belief that one has been chosen by God from eternity for salvation, for no reason inherent in themselves, while the rest of humanity has been passed over for damnation, can easily lead to a "we-four-and-no-more" mentality. It can create a spiritual caste system of the "elect" and the "reprobate." True biblical humility comes not from believing we are the passive recipients of an exclusive, arbitrary choice, but from recognizing that we are all equally unworthy sinners who have been offered an astonishing gift of grace. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Humility is born from the knowledge that God's mercy was available to all, and we are saved only because we cast ourselves upon that mercy, not because we were the secret favorites in a divine lottery.

**Question 58. How does the belief in irresistible grace affect personal responsibility and the motivation for holy living?**

**Answer 58.** The belief in irresistible grace, coupled with the perseverance of the saints, can have a detrimental effect on a believer's sense of personal responsibility and motivation for holy living. If one's salvation is not only initiated but also infallibly carried to completion by an irresistible force, the urgency of the biblical commands to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," to "strive," and to "fight the good fight of faith" is diminished. It can foster a passive approach to our ongoing growth in following Christ, an attitude of "let go and let God" that is foreign to the New Testament's emphasis on diligent effort and watchfulness. Furthermore, it can lead to a dangerous complacency regarding sin. If a person believes they are eternally secure regardless of their conduct, the **motivation to vigorously pursue holiness can be eroded**. The Bible, however, motivates us with both the promise of reward for obedience and the solemn warning of the consequences of disobedience, creating a healthy, dynamic tension that promotes a life of active, responsible faith.

**Question 59. If God is the ultimate cause of all things, including unbelief, how can He be said to take "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11)?**

**Answer 59.** The biblical declaration that God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" is irreconcilable with a system where God is the ultimate cause of all things, including the unbelief that leads to that death. If God eternally and unchangeably decreed that a specific person would live in unbelief and be damned, and then brought this decree to pass through irresistible means, it is a logical contradiction to then claim He takes no pleasure in the outcome He Himself ordained. It would mean God's stated desire is in direct opposition to His secret, decretive will. This portrays God as being internally conflicted or insincere. The plain meaning of the text in Ezekiel is that God's heart is genuinely oriented toward life and salvation. He pleads with the wicked to "turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This is the plea of a loving God who has **made**

**salvation possible for all**, not the pronouncement of a fatalistic deity who takes no pleasure in the execution of his own immutable, damning decree.

**Question 60. How does the Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty compare with the biblical portrayal of God as a relational being who interacts with and responds to His creation?**

**Answer 60.** The Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty as a meticulous, deterministic control of all events stands in stark contrast to the biblical portrayal of God as a deeply relational being who genuinely interacts with and responds to His creation. The Bible is filled with stories of God responding to human prayer, relenting from judgment because of repentance (as with Nineveh), and engaging in genuine dialogue with His people. He is a God who can be grieved, who rejoices, and who pleads with His children. The deterministic view of sovereignty tends to reduce these interactions to a divine script, where God is merely acting out a part in a play He wrote from eternity. It replaces the living, dynamic God of the Bible with the "unmoved mover" of Greek philosophy. The biblical God, however, is not a distant, impassive force. He is a **Father who has sovereignly chosen to enter into a real, responsive relationship** with the beings He created in His own image, a relationship where our choices and prayers genuinely matter.

## Historical and Textual Considerations

**Question 61. Is the TULIP framework a direct summary of biblical teaching, or is it a later theological construct developed by the followers of John Calvin?**

**Answer 61.** The TULIP framework (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints) is not a direct summary of biblical teaching, but a **later theological construct** developed to summarize the judgments of the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. This synod was convened to respond to the teachings of the followers of Jacobus Arminius. While John Calvin's writings certainly laid the groundwork for these doctrines, the five-point acronym itself was not formulated by him and only became popularized much later. It represents a systematic, philosophical attempt to codify certain aspects of God's sovereignty, but it does so by isolating specific verses from their broader context and creating a logically coherent but biblically unbalanced system. It is a product of post-Reformation debate, not a summary that would be naturally derived from a plain, topical reading of the entire Bible.

**Question 62. How did the early church fathers before Augustine understand the doctrines of free will, election, and grace?**

**Answer 62.** The overwhelming consensus of the early church fathers before Augustine of Hippo (late 4th century) was a belief in human free will and a rejection of deterministic predestination. Figures like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria consistently taught that humans possess the freedom to choose between good and evil and are responsible for their choices. They understood election as being based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe, and grace as a divine assistance that enables, but does not coerce, the human will. The doctrines of an inherited guilt from Adam that destroys free will and an unconditional, individual election to



salvation or damnation were **largely foreign to the first three centuries of Christian thought**. Augustine's later shift toward a more deterministic view, influenced by his battle with Pelagianism and his background in Manichaean philosophy, represented a significant departure from the traditional understanding of the early church.

**Question 63. What is the "cherry-picking fallacy," and how might it apply to the way different theological systems use Scripture?**

**Answer 63.** The "cherry-picking fallacy," also known as the fallacy of incomplete evidence, is the act of pointing to individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position, while ignoring a significant portion of related cases or data that may contradict that position. This fallacy is a common pitfall in theological debate. Many systematic theologies, including Calvinism, are constructed by **gathering a specific set of verses** that, when read in isolation, appear to support their core tenets. For example, verses on God's sovereignty are emphasized, while verses on human responsibility and the universal call to salvation are reinterpreted or minimized to fit the system. A true topical Bible study, however, demands that *all* relevant verses on a subject be gathered and harmonized. The cherry-picking fallacy builds a seemingly strong case on a weak foundation, creating a doctrine that cannot stand up to the weight of the whole counsel of God.

**Question 64. How does the doctrine of the Book of Life, as presented throughout the Bible, challenge the foundational tenets of Calvinism?**

**Answer 64.** The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life presents a profound and direct challenge to the foundational tenets of Calvinism, particularly unconditional election and the perseverance of the saints. The Bible speaks of this book as a heavenly registry, but crucially, it reveals that names can be **blotted out** (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5). This single fact is devastating to the Calvinistic system. If a name can be removed, it means that the person's inclusion in the book was conditional, not an unchangeable, eternal decree. It implies that salvation can be forfeited. Furthermore, the idea that names were written from the foundation of the world, yet some are later removed, perfectly harmonizes God's universal, loving provision with individual responsibility and the necessity of persevering faith. It suggests a God who desires all to be saved, but who will not keep the name of one who ultimately turns away from Him in unrepentant sin.

**Question 65. What is the significance of the fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel?**

**Answer 65.** The fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel is of immense significance for proper biblical interpretation. It means that many of the key "proof texts" used to support the doctrine of individual, unconditional election are being taken out of their primary historical and covenantal context. When Jesus speaks of the "elect" in the Olivet Discourse, He is talking about the Jewish people. When Paul discusses election in Romans 9-11, his entire argument revolves around the status of Israel in God's redemptive plan and the inclusion of the Gentiles. To ignore this **national and corporate dimension of election** and read a later, philosophical definition of individual predestination back into these texts is a serious interpretive error. It flattens the rich, salvation-historical narrative of the Bible into a sterile, abstract system and misapplies promises and warnings intended for a specific covenant people.

**Question 66. How does a pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books affect our understanding of prophecies related to Israel and the "end times"?**

**Answer 66.** A pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books radically affects our understanding of prophecy by grounding many "end times" passages in their immediate historical context: the impending judgment on Jerusalem and the end of the Old Covenant age. Many of the dramatic pronouncements of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and the symbolic judgments in the book of Revelation can be seen as directly referring to the catastrophic events of the Jewish-Roman War, which culminated in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. This preterist view does not necessarily deny a future second coming of Christ, but it recognizes that many prophecies had a **near, historical fulfillment** that was profoundly significant for the early church. It shifts the focus from speculative, newspaper-headline eschatology to the reality that the "end of the age" for the apostles was the end of the Mosaic, temple-centric system, making way for the new international covenant in Christ.

**Question 67. Are the defining doctrines of Calvinism discoverable by a plain reading of the Bible, or do they require a specific philosophical and theological framework?**

**Answer 67.** The defining doctrines of Calvinism, particularly the more abstract points like limited atonement and irresistible grace, are not readily discoverable by a plain, inductive reading of the Bible. They require a **specific philosophical and theological framework** to be read into the text. A person reading the Bible for the first time, without prior indoctrination, would naturally conclude from the "whosoever" passages that the gospel offer is for everyone. They would conclude from the numerous warnings that falling away is a real possibility. The TULIP system is a product of deductive reasoning, starting with a philosophical premise about God's absolute, meticulous sovereignty and then interpreting all of Scripture through that lens. It is a logically coherent system, but its coherence is imposed upon the text, not derived naturally from it. The need for extensive theological training and commentary to understand and defend the system is itself evidence that it is not the plain teaching of the Word of God.

**Question 68. How have different Bible translations, based on different manuscript traditions (e.g., Textus Receptus vs. Alexandrian), influenced the interpretation of key verses related to Calvinism?**

**Answer 68.** While the core tenets of the debate can be argued from any major translation, the differences between manuscript traditions can subtly influence the interpretation of key verses. The Textus Receptus, which underlies the King James Version, often contains readings that are more supportive of a universal atonement and resistible grace. In contrast, the Alexandrian manuscripts (like Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), which form the basis for most modern translations (NIV, ESV, etc.), sometimes have variant readings that can be interpreted to favor a more deterministic view. For example, some scholars argue that certain omissions or changes in the Alexandrian text can weaken the emphasis on human response or the universal scope of certain passages. While no single variant decides the entire debate, the cumulative effect of these textual differences can **create a slightly different theological flavor**, making it easier for a particular system to find support in one manuscript tradition over another. This highlights the importance of being aware of textual criticism when engaging in deep doctrinal study.

**Question 69. What role did the philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism play in the development of Augustine's theology?**

**Answer 69.** The philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism played a significant, though complex, role in the development of Augustine's later theology, particularly his views on predestination and free will. Before his conversion, Augustine was a Manichaean, a dualistic religion that taught a form of fatalism and the idea of two eternally warring principles (good and evil). This background likely predisposed him to deterministic thinking. More subtly, the broader intellectual climate was saturated with Greco-Roman philosophy, including Stoicism, which held to a concept of an all-encompassing divine reason (Logos) and a form of fate that governed all things. While Augustine would have rejected these pagan systems outright after his conversion, their **underlying thought structures and assumptions about determinism and causality** appear to have been repurposed and "baptized" into his Christian framework, especially in his later writings against Pelagius. This led him to formulate a doctrine of predestination that was a departure from the earlier church fathers and bore a structural resemblance to the pagan fatalism he had once renounced.

**Question 70. How does the message of John the Baptist to the nation of Israel serve as a refutation of the core principles of TULIP?**

**Answer 70.** The message of John the Baptist serves as a concise and powerful refutation of the core principles of TULIP. First, he confronts the "elect" nation of Israel, warning them that their lineage from Abraham (their election) does not guarantee their salvation, which challenges **Unconditional Election**. Second, he demands "fruits meet for repentance," indicating that a human response is necessary and that grace is not **Irresistible**. Third, his warning that the axe is already at the root of the tree and that fruitless trees will be "hewn down, and cast into the fire" directly contradicts the **Perseverance of the Saints**, showing that even the elect can be cut off. Fourth, by implication, his universal call to repentance suggests a universal problem and a universally available solution, which stands against the idea of a **Limited Atonement**. Finally, his entire ministry, which calls for a choice and a response, presumes a will that is not in a state of **Total Inability** to respond to God's command. In his brief ministry, John dismantled the very pillars upon which this later system would be built.

## **The Church and the Christian Life**

**Question 71. How does one's view of salvation (Calvinist vs. non-Calvinist) impact their approach to evangelism and missions?**

**Answer 71.** One's view of salvation significantly impacts their approach to evangelism and missions, particularly in its urgency and methodology. A consistent Calvinist, who believes that the elect have been unconditionally chosen and will be irresistibly drawn, may view evangelism more as a means of "gathering" the pre-destined elect than as a desperate plea to the perishing. The urgency can be diminished if the outcome is already guaranteed. The non-Calvinist, believing that any person can be saved but can also reject the offer, tends to approach evangelism with a greater sense of urgency and a focus on persuasion, pleading with sinners to be reconciled to God. The



message itself can also differ. The Calvinist may emphasize God's sovereign choice, while the non-Calvinist will likely emphasize the "**whosoever will**" nature of the invitation and the personal responsibility of the hearer to repent and believe. While both may be active in missions, their underlying motivation and the content of their appeal are shaped by their foundational beliefs about who can be saved and how.

**Question 72. What is the biblical model for church government, and how does it compare to the hierarchical structures often found in denominational churches?**

**Answer 72.** The biblical model for church government, as seen in the New Testament, is simple, local, and non-hierarchical. It is centered on the local assembly, which is autonomous and led by a plurality of elders (also called bishops or pastors—the terms are used interchangeably) who meet the spiritual qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These elders were responsible for shepherding and teaching the flock. They were assisted by deacons, who were responsible for the physical needs and service of the church. This model stands in stark contrast to the **complex, top-down hierarchical structures** of many modern denominations, with their synods, councils, presidents, and district superintendents. The New Testament knows nothing of a clerical authority structure beyond the local church. The biblical model is one of servant leadership among equals, under the ultimate headship of Jesus Christ, not a corporate-style pyramid of power and control.

**Question 73. According to the New Testament, what is the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church?**

**Answer 73.** According to the New Testament, the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church was the **care of the poor and needy within the community of believers**. In the book of Acts, we see the early Christians selling possessions and laying the money at the apostles' feet for distribution to anyone who had need. Paul's major fundraising effort among the Gentile churches was specifically "for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." The collection was for "good works," primarily supporting widows, orphans, the sick, and those imprisoned for their faith. This biblical model is a far cry from the modern practice where the majority of church budgets are consumed by building mortgages, staff salaries, and administrative costs. The New Testament concept of offering was rooted in charity and mutual support, a "widow and orphan fund," not in the maintenance of an institution or the payment of a professional clergy.

**Question 74. How should believers respond to those who teach a different gospel or a different view of salvation?**

**Answer 74.** The Bible gives clear and firm instructions on how believers should respond to those who teach a different gospel. The primary response is **separation**. Paul's anathema in Galatians 1:8-9 is severe: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." In Romans 16:17, he commands believers to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." 2 John 10-11 goes even further, instructing not to receive such a person into your house or even bid them God speed, lest you become a partaker in their evil deeds. This is not a call to be rude or hateful, but a necessary measure to protect the purity of the church and

the truth of the gospel. The response is not endless debate, but a clear identification of the error and a decisive separation from its influence.

**Question 75. What is the role of "good works" in the life of a believer, and how do they relate to salvation?**

**Answer 75.** The role of "good works" in the life of a believer is that of **necessary evidence, not the saving cause**. The Bible is unequivocally clear that we are saved by grace through faith, "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). However, the very next verse states that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Good works are the inevitable and natural fruit of a life that has been genuinely regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They are the proof of the reality of our faith, for as James 2:26 says, "faith without works is dead." They do not contribute to our justification, but they demonstrate it. They are not the root of our salvation, but the fruit that grows from it. A life devoid of good works calls into question the authenticity of one's profession of faith.

**Question 76. How does the concept of "Christian liberty" apply to matters of conscience and theological disagreement?**

**Answer 76.** Christian liberty is the freedom from the bondage of sin and the condemnation of the law that is granted to believers in Christ. In matters of conscience and theological disagreement, this liberty should be exercised with wisdom, love, and a deep respect for fellow believers. Paul's teaching in Romans 14 provides the guiding principle: in non-essential matters (like eating certain foods or observing certain days), believers should not judge or despise one another. Each person must be "fully persuaded in his own mind." Our liberty should never be used as an "occasion to the flesh" or as a stumbling block to a weaker brother. This means that while we may be free to hold a certain theological view, we must present it with grace and not use it to create division or lord it over others. In the essentials of the gospel, there must be unity. In the non-essentials, there must be **liberty**. In all things, there must be charity.

**Question 77. What does the Bible teach about the assurance of salvation, and on what basis can a believer have this assurance?**

**Answer 77.** The Bible teaches that a believer can have a genuine and solid assurance of salvation, but this assurance is not based on a one-time decision in the past or a belief in an unconditional decree. Rather, biblical assurance is a present and ongoing confidence rooted in three things. First, it is based on the **objective truth of God's promises** and the finished work of Christ. We trust what God has said in His Word. Second, it is confirmed by the **internal witness of the Holy Spirit**, who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Third, and crucially, it is evidenced by a **transformed life**. 1 John was written specifically so that believers may "know that ye have eternal life," and the tests it provides are moral (do we walk in the light and obey His commandments?) and social (do we love the brethren?). True assurance is a cord of three strands: trusting God's promise, listening to the Spirit's witness, and seeing the fruit of salvation in our own lives.

**Question 78. How should a local church practice discipline, especially in cases of serious sin or heresy?**

**Answer 78.** The practice of church discipline, as outlined in the New Testament, is a necessary and loving process designed to restore a straying believer and to protect the purity of the local church. The model given by Jesus in Matthew 18 involves a progressive approach. First, the sinning brother should be confronted privately. If he does not listen, one or two others should be brought as witnesses. If he still refuses to repent, the matter should be brought before the entire church. If he refuses to hear the church, he is to be treated as an outsider, a "heathen man and a publican." In cases of serious, public sin, such as the immorality described in 1 Corinthians 5, or the teaching of heresy, the response is more immediate: the person is to be removed from the fellowship ("put away from among yourselves that wicked person") to prevent the "leaven" from spreading. The goal is always **redemptive**, but the means require a firm and decisive separation from unrepentant sin and false doctrine.

**Question 79. What is the relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church?**

**Answer 79.** The relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church is one of respectful submission, but not blind obedience. The believer's ultimate allegiance is to Christ and His Word, and the conscience, informed by the Holy Spirit and Scripture, is the faculty through which that allegiance is exercised. Church leaders are to be honored and obeyed as they faithfully teach the Word of God. However, as the Bereans demonstrated in Acts 17, it is noble and right to **test all teachings against the Scriptures** to see if they are true. No church or leader has the authority to command a believer to violate their conscience or to believe something that contradicts the plain teaching of the Bible. The individual conscience, when held captive to the Word of God, is the final arbiter. The authority of the church is derivative; it comes from its faithfulness to the authority of Christ and His Word.

**Question 80. How can believers from different theological perspectives maintain unity and fellowship in the body of Christ?**

**Answer 80.** Believers from different theological perspectives can maintain unity and fellowship by focusing on the core essentials of the Christian faith and exercising grace and liberty in the non-essentials. The foundation of unity is a shared belief in the foundational truths of the gospel: the deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. On these matters, there can be no compromise. However, on secondary and tertiary issues—such as the precise mechanics of election, the timing of eschatological events, or modes of worship—there must be room for charitable disagreement. The key is to distinguish between **doctrinal mountains and theological molehills**. Unity does not mean uniformity of thought on every single issue. It means loving one another, bearing with one another's differences, and striving to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," all while earnestly contending for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.



## Challenging Key Calvinist Proof Texts

**Question 81. In Romans 9, is Paul discussing individual salvation or God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption through Israel?**

**Answer 81.** A careful reading of Romans 9 in its full context reveals that Paul's primary subject is not the eternal salvation or damnation of individuals, but **God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption as worked out through the nation of Israel**. The chapter is Paul's answer to the question of whether God's promises to Israel have failed, given that the majority of the nation had rejected their Messiah. Paul's use of Jacob and Esau, and Pharaoh, are illustrations of God's sovereign right to choose nations and individuals for specific roles within His historical plan, not proof texts for an unconditional, pre-temporal decree of salvation. He is demonstrating that God's purpose has always been accomplished through a chosen remnant, and that He is now sovereignly grafting in the Gentiles. To interpret this chapter as a blueprint for individual predestination is to ignore the central theme of the entire section (Romans 9-11), which is the relationship between Israel and the church in God's unfolding plan.

**Question 82. In John 6:44 ("No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"), does the word "draw" imply an irresistible force, or a wooing and enabling?**

**Answer 82.** While the Greek word for "draw" (*helkuo*) can mean to drag by force, its usage in Scripture and the broader context of the Gospel suggests a meaning closer to a powerful wooing and enabling, not an irresistible force. In John 12:32, Jesus uses the same word, saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** unto me." Clearly, not all men are irresistibly saved, so the "drawing" cannot be coercive. It refers to the universal, magnetic appeal of the cross. Furthermore, the Bible is clear that this divine drawing can be resisted. Stephen accused the Jewish leaders of always resisting the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the drawing of the Father in John 6:44 is the necessary, divine initiative that overcomes human inability and makes it possible for a person to come to Christ, but it is not a violation of the human will. It is a powerful, life-giving summons that can be either accepted or rejected.

**Question 83. In Acts 13:48 ("as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"), does "ordained" refer to a pre-temporal decree or a present disposition of the heart?**

**Answer 83.** The interpretation of "ordained" in Acts 13:48 hinges on the meaning of the Greek word *tasso*. While it can mean "appointed" or "decreed," it can also mean "disposed," "inclined," or "arranged." Given the context, it is highly probable that it refers to a **present disposition of the heart**, not a pre-temporal, fatalistic decree. The verse describes the reaction of the Gentiles in Antioch to the preaching of the gospel. In contrast to the blaspheming Jews who judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, these Gentiles were well-disposed, receptive, and inclined toward the message they were hearing. Their hearts were prepared by the Holy Spirit to believe. Therefore, the verse can be understood to mean, "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed." This reading harmonizes with the rest of Scripture's emphasis on human response and avoids the theological problems created by reading a deterministic decree into the text.

**Question 84. When Jesus says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John 17:9), is He speaking about the scope of His atonement or the specific focus of His high priestly prayer?**

**Answer 84.** In John 17:9, Jesus is speaking about the **specific focus of His high priestly prayer**, not the scope of His atonement. This entire chapter is an intimate prayer of the Son to the Father on the eve of His crucifixion. In this moment, His focus is on the disciples who were with Him and on all future believers who would come to faith through their testimony. It is a prayer for their protection, sanctification, and unity. It is not a theological statement limiting the efficacy of His impending death. Elsewhere, the Bible is abundantly clear that Christ is the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). To use this specific, focused prayer to argue for a limited atonement is to take the verse out of its immediate context and force it to contradict the plain teaching of other scriptures.

**Question 85. In Ephesians 1:4-5, are believers chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for salvation, or for the purpose of being holy and blameless?**

**Answer 85.** Ephesians 1:4-5 teaches that believers were chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for a specific purpose: **that they "should be holy and without blame before him in love."** The focus of the election described here is the believer's sanctification and ultimate glorification, not an unconditional election to salvation itself. The passage goes on to say we are "predestinated unto the adoption of children." This is about the destination and privileged position of those who are in Christ. The election is corporate—it applies to all who are "in him." The error is to read this as God choosing certain individuals to be placed "in him" while passing over others. The biblical teaching is that God made a plan before the world began for what would happen to everyone who, by faith, entered into union with Christ. The choice is to be "in Christ," and the result of that choice is this glorious, predestined inheritance.

**Question 86. How should we understand the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9:22-23?**

**Answer 86.** The "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9 must be understood within the chapter's context of God's sovereign dealings with nations in history, particularly Israel and the Gentiles. The "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" are not individuals predestined to hell from eternity, but those, like Pharaoh or the unbelieving portion of Israel, who by their own persistent rebellion make themselves fit for God's judgment. The Greek verb for "fitted" is in a middle or passive voice, suggesting they fitted themselves for destruction. In contrast, the "vessels of mercy" are those whom God "had **afore prepared** unto glory." Here, the verb is active—God actively prepares them. These are the believing remnant of Israel and the called Gentiles. The passage is not about an arbitrary, eternal decree, but about how God responds to human rebellion and faith within the unfolding of His redemptive plan, demonstrating both His wrath and His glorious mercy.

**Question 87. Does Philippians 2:13 ("For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure") negate the role of human choice and effort?**

**Answer 87.** Philippians 2:13 does not negate human choice and effort; it establishes the divine foundation for it. The verse must be read in conjunction with the preceding verse: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you..." The two clauses are presented as complementary, not contradictory. It is precisely **because God is at work in us** that we are able to work. His internal work of grace enables our external work of obedience. The verse teaches the synergy of the divine and the human in the process of our ongoing growth in following Christ. It does not teach a divine monergism where the believer is merely a passive vessel. God provides the desire ("to will") and the power ("to do"), but the believer is still commanded to "work out" what God is working in. It is a beautiful picture of partnership, not a negation of human responsibility.

**Question 88. In John 10:26, does Jesus say that people do not believe because they are not His sheep, or that they are not His sheep because they do not believe?**

**Answer 88.** In John 10:26, Jesus says, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." At first glance, this seems to support the idea that a person's status as a sheep precedes their belief. However, the grammar and the broader context suggest the opposite. The reason they are not His sheep is demonstrated by their unbelief. Being a "sheep" is not an abstract, pre-ordained status, but a description of a relationship characterized by hearing the Shepherd's voice and following Him. Jesus's next words are, "My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me." Therefore, the statement is a description of their present condition: **their unbelief is the very evidence that they are not in a relationship with Him.** They are not His sheep precisely because they refuse to believe and follow. It is not that they are unable to believe because of a secret decree, but that their willful unbelief excludes them from the flock.

**Question 89. How does the immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 ("There is none righteous, no, not one") inform our understanding of its application to all of humanity?**

**Answer 89.** The immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 is crucial for its proper application. Paul is building a legal case to prove the universal sinfulness of all humanity, **both Jew and Gentile**, in order to demonstrate that no one can be justified by the works of the Law. He quotes a series of Old Testament passages to show that everyone, without exception, has fallen short of God's standard and is under the condemnation of sin. The purpose of this passage is to establish the universal *need* for salvation, not to define the doctrine of *inability* to believe. It is a diagnosis of the human condition, showing that all are guilty and in need of a righteousness that comes from outside themselves—the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ. To use this passage to argue that no unregenerate person can even seek God or respond to His grace is to press it beyond its intended purpose, which is to level the ground at the foot of the cross and show that all are equally in need of the Gospel.

**Question 90. When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, does it mean that He actively creates unbelief, or that He gives people over to their own rebellious choices?**

**Answer 90.** When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, it does not mean that He actively creates or infuses unbelief into a neutral or willing heart. Rather, it is a judicial act whereby He **gives a person over to the rebellious choices they have already made.** The classic example is



Pharaoh, where the text says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God hardened it. Pharaoh first set his will against God's. In response, God confirmed him in his rebellion, removing His restraining mercy and allowing the natural consequences of Pharaoh's pride to run their course. This is consistent with Romans 1, where, because people "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," God "gave them over to a reprobate mind." The hardening is a consequence of, not the cause of, human rebellion. It is a terrifying judgment, but it is a just one, as it is a response to a person's persistent and willful rejection of God's authority and grace.

## Synthesis and Conclusion

**Question 91. After examining all the relevant scriptures, can the five points of TULIP be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching?**

**Answer 91.** After a comprehensive examination of all the relevant scriptures, the five points of TULIP cannot be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching without significant and unnatural distortion of the text. The system is built upon a selective reading of Scripture, emphasizing verses on God's sovereignty while reinterpreting, explaining away, or ignoring the vast number of passages that teach the universal love of God, the unlimited scope of the atonement, the resistibility of grace, and the conditional nature of salvation. The Bible consistently presents a God who genuinely desires all to be saved, a Christ who died for the whole world, a Holy Spirit who can be resisted, and a salvation that can be forfeited through unbelief and apostasy. TULIP creates a philosophical system that is logically coherent within its own premises, but those premises **do not align with the full counsel of God's Word**. It sacrifices the relational, responsive God of the Bible for the deterministic "unmoved mover" of Greek philosophy.

**Question 92. What are the most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible?**

**Answer 92.** The most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible revolve around the character of God and the nature of the gospel offer. First, the doctrine of unconditional reprobation creates a severe tension with the biblical portrayal of a loving and just God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Second, the doctrine of a limited atonement is in direct conflict with the numerous passages stating that Christ died for "all" and for the "whole world," making the universal gospel invitation seem insincere. Third, the doctrine of irresistible grace is contradicted by the clear biblical statements that the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Finally, the doctrine of unconditional perseverance is challenged by the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about the real danger of falling away. A plain reader of the Bible would naturally conclude that **God's offer is genuine for all and that a believer's response and endurance truly matter**, points that the Calvinistic system must redefine to maintain its coherence.

**Question 93. How does the "either-or logical fallacy" contribute to the debate between Calvinism and other theological systems?**

**Answer 93.** The "either-or logical fallacy," also known as a false dilemma, is a major contributor to the endless debate between Calvinism and other systems. This fallacy wrongly presents two options as the only possibilities, when in fact other alternatives exist. The debate is often framed as: **either God is absolutely sovereign (Calvinism), or man has free will (Arminianism).** This forces a choice between two extremes and prevents a proper synthesis of the biblical data. The Bible, however, does not present these as mutually exclusive. It teaches both God's absolute sovereignty and man's genuine responsibility. The biblical position is not "either-or," but "both-and." God is so sovereign that He can grant free will to His creatures and still accomplish His purposes. The fallacy forces theologians to build systems that defend one pole of the truth while minimizing the other, leading to imbalanced theologies and perpetual conflict. The solution is to reject the false choice and embrace the full, paradoxical testimony of Scripture.

**Question 94. What is the "story of the blind men and the elephant," and how does it illustrate the danger of building a theology on incomplete evidence?**

**Answer 94.** The story of the blind men and the elephant is a powerful parable about the danger of building a conclusion on incomplete evidence. In the story, several blind men touch different parts of an elephant—one touches the trunk and says it is a snake, another touches the leg and says it is a tree, another touches the tail and says it is a rope. Each man's conclusion is based on his limited experience, and all are wrong because none has perceived the whole animal. This perfectly illustrates the danger of building a theological system like Calvinism by focusing on one aspect of God's character—His sovereignty—while neglecting other aspects, like His universal love and His call to human responsibility. By isolating certain verses and building a system around them, **one creates a caricature of the truth**, a theological "snake" or "tree" instead of the magnificent, multifaceted "elephant" of God's full self-revelation in Scripture. It is a cautionary tale against the cherry-picking fallacy and a call to embrace the whole counsel of God.

**Question 95. What is the central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation for humanity?**

**Answer 95.** The central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation is that God, out of His great love for a fallen world, has made a way for **reconciliation and eternal life through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.** This plan, conceived before the foundation of the world, is not a secret, selective rescue mission for a few, but a glorious, universal offer extended to all humanity. The message, from Genesis to Revelation, is one of promise and fulfillment. God promised a Redeemer, and Jesus is that Redeemer. His death on the cross was a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and His resurrection is the guarantee of new life. The condition for entering into this salvation has always been the same: faith in God and His provision. It is a message of grace that is freely offered and must be freely received, a message that breaks down every human barrier and unites all believers into one body in Christ.

**Question 96. How does a proper understanding of the Book of Life provide a key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance?**

**Answer 96.** A proper understanding of the Book of Life provides a powerful biblical key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance. The crucial insight is that the Bible speaks

not of names being added to the book, but of names being **blotted out**. This suggests that God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote everyone's name in the book from the foundation of the world, based on the sufficient atonement of the Lamb. This affirms a universal, gracious election. However, this inclusion is conditional. A person's name remains in the book through a life of faith, but can be removed through unrepentant sin and apostasy. This harmonizes the promises of God's keeping power with the solemn warnings against falling away. It affirms that our security is real, yet conditional upon our abiding in Christ. This doctrine single-handedly dismantles the rigid categories of Calvinism, replacing a deterministic system with a dynamic, relational one that upholds both God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

**Question 97. What are the practical implications of adopting a Calvinistic worldview for one's personal relationship with God?**

**Answer 97.** Adopting a Calvinistic worldview can have profound and often troubling practical implications for one's personal relationship with God. While some may find comfort in the idea of an unchangeable decree, many struggle with deep-seated anxiety about whether they are truly one of the elect. Assurance can become a matter of intense, introspective speculation rather than a simple trust in Christ's promises. Prayer can feel less like a genuine dialogue and more like a scripted monologue. Furthermore, the view of God as a being who has unconditionally ordained multitudes to damnation can create a sense of fear and distance, making it difficult to relate to Him as a loving and trustworthy Father. It can also lead to a diminished sense of personal responsibility for one's own spiritual growth and a lessened urgency in evangelism. Ultimately, it can replace the **warm, relational God of the Bible** with a cold, distant, and fatalistic deity.

**Question 98. How can a topical Bible study method help to cut through the complexities and contradictions of different theological systems?**

**Answer 98.** A topical Bible study method is the most effective tool for cutting through the complexities and contradictions of man-made theological systems. Instead of starting with a system (like TULIP) and trying to find verses to support it, the topical method starts with the Bible alone. By **gathering every verse on a given subject**—such as grace, election, or atonement—and laying them all out together, the student allows Scripture to interpret Scripture. This process naturally exposes the imbalances of systems that have "cherry-picked" certain verses while ignoring others. It forces a harmonization of the full biblical testimony, revealing a more balanced and nuanced truth than any single system can offer. It bypasses centuries of philosophical debate and denominational tradition, empowering the individual believer to build their convictions directly on the solid rock of the whole counsel of God, rather than the shifting sands of human reasoning.

**Question 99. What is the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer, according to the Bible?**

**Answer 99.** According to the Bible, the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer is not found in a speculative, unconditional decree, but in the **person and finished work of Jesus Christ, received and held by a living faith**. Our hope is anchored in His precious blood, which was shed for our sins, and in His glorious resurrection, which guarantees our own. Our assurance



comes from His unwavering promises, such as "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This objective foundation is then confirmed subjectively by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and the external evidence of a transformed life of obedience and love. It is a hope that is both a gift and a responsibility—a "blessed hope" that we are commanded to "hold fast" without wavering. It is not a passive certainty, but an active, vibrant trust in the character and promises of a God who is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come to Him through Christ.

**Question 100. How can we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) in a spirit of truth and love?**

**Answer 100.** We can "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" by embodying a spirit of both unwavering conviction and profound humility. Contending in truth means we must be diligent students of the Word, building our beliefs on the solid rock of Scripture alone, not on the traditions of men. It requires us to be like the Bereans, testing every teaching, and to be unafraid to identify and separate from doctrines that contradict the core tenets of the gospel. However, contending in love means our defense of the truth must never be motivated by pride, arrogance, or a desire to win arguments. It must be done with a genuine concern for the souls of others and a deep humility that recognizes we too are saved by grace. It means speaking the truth, but speaking it **in love**, with patience and gentleness toward those who are in error, always seeking their restoration rather than their condemnation. It is this balance of doctrinal integrity and gracious character that truly honors Christ and effectively contends for His truth.

## Part II: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Comprehensive Answers

### The Foundation: God's Nature and Man's Condition

**Question 1. How does the Bible describe the love of God, and does it present this love as being for all people or only for a select group?**

**Answer 1. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The love of God, as depicted in the architecture of Scripture, is not a monolithic beam shining on a select few, but a light with a dual aspect: a universal, benevolent love extended to all creation, and a particular, covenantal love reserved for His children. To flatten this reality into a simplistic "either-or" is to misread the divine blueprint. The Bible's most famous declaration, John 3:16, states unequivocally that God "so loved **the world**" that He gave His Son. This is not the language of limitation. This is the language of boundless, sincere compassion. 1 Timothy 2:4 further illuminates this divine disposition, stating God "will have **all men** to be saved." This reveals the heart of the Father—a genuine desire for the redemption of every person. This universal, compassionate love is the foundation for the bona fide offer of the gospel to every creature. However, Scripture also speaks of a special, familial love God has for those who are "in Christ." This is the intimate love of a Father for His adopted children, a love that secures, sanctifies, and glorifies. The error of many theological systems is to make these two aspects of God's love mutually exclusive. They are not. God's particular, saving love for the believer does not negate or render insincere His compassionate, universal love for the world He created. He is both the Savior of all men, and *especially* of those that believe (1 Timothy 4:10). The sun shines on the evil and the good, even while the gardener gives special attention to the plants in his own walled garden.

**Scripture References:** Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Deuteronomy 10:15, Deuteronomy 10:18, Deuteronomy 23:5, Job 7:17, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 49:15-16, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:4, Zephaniah 3:17, Malachi 1:2-3, John 3:16, John 15:9-10, John 16:27, John 17:23, John 17:26, Romans 5:5, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:39, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Titus 3:4-7, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:8-10, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:19, Jude 1:21

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The most common **rebuttal** centers on verses that appear to teach a selective, particular love. Opponents will immediately point to Malachi 1:3, quoted in Romans 9, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." They argue this proves God chooses to love some and hate others from before birth. This interpretation, however, ignores the context. In both Malachi and Romans, the reference is to **nations** (the Edomites and the Israelites) and their roles in God's redemptive history, not the eternal salvation of the individuals themselves. "Hate" in this Hebrew idiom means "to love less" or "to reject from a place of honor," not an active, malicious hatred. Another common **rebuttal** is Jesus' prayer in John 17:9, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." This is presented as proof that Christ's love and atoning work were not for the world. But this argument confuses the specific focus of His High Priestly prayer for His disciples on the eve of His death with the overall scope of His mission. In that same gospel, Jesus is called the "Saviour of the world" (John 4:42) and it is said He was given so that the "world

through him might be saved" (John 3:17). A specific prayer for His inner circle does not cancel out His stated universal mission.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This limited view of God's love is a cornerstone doctrine in staunchly Calvinistic denominations, such as certain **Presbyterian churches (PCA, OPC), Reformed Baptist churches, and Dutch Reformed churches**. The historical origin of this specific theological framework can be traced to the later writings of **Augustine of Hippo**, particularly after **412 AD**. In his polemics against the Pelagians, Augustine developed a systematic theology of predestination and irresistible grace that necessitated a view of God's saving love as being exclusively for the elect. This was a significant departure from the understanding of the earlier church fathers, who emphasized God's universal love and man's free will. This Augustinian framework was later codified and popularized by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first published in 1536), making it a central pillar of the Protestant Reformed tradition.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Malachi 1:2-3, John 17:9, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 9:11-13, Ephesians 1:4-5

**Verses of Correction:** John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Ezekiel 33:11, John 4:42, 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The primary logical error is the **False Dilemma** (also known as the either-or fallacy). This fallacy presents two options as the only possibilities, when in fact more options exist. The argument is framed as: either God loves everyone in exactly the same saving way, or He only loves the elect. This ignores the biblically consistent third option: that God possesses different kinds of love, or different expressions of His love. It is like saying a man either loves every woman in the world exactly as he loves his wife, or he does not love his wife at all. This is obviously false. He has a general, benevolent love for humanity, but a special, covenantal, intimate love for his wife. The Bible presents God in the same way.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption rooted in **philosophical determinism**. Determinism is the belief that all events are causally determined by an unbroken chain of preceding events. When applied to theology, it leads to the conclusion that God must meticulously control every outcome, including who is loved and who is not. This removes the possibility of a genuine, universal offer. It forces God's love into a rigid, mechanical framework, where it is not a relational attribute but merely an expression of a pre-ordained, unchangeable decree. This is more akin to the fatalism of the ancient Greek Stoics than the relational Father revealed in the Bible.

**Question 2. According to Scripture, what is the extent of God's sovereignty? Does His sovereignty negate human free will and responsibility?**

**Answer 2. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The sovereignty of God, according to the biblical witness, is absolute, exhaustive, and total. There is not a single molecule in the universe that is outside of His ultimate control; He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Yet, this absolute sovereignty does not negate or render illusory the reality of human free will and responsibility. The Bible holds these two truths in a perfect, unwavering tension. The same God



who declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," also commands humanity, "choose you this day whom ye will serve." This is not a contradiction to be solved, but a divine paradox to be embraced. The critical error of deterministic systems is to assume that for God to be sovereign, man must be a mere automaton. But is a king less sovereign because he grants his subjects the freedom to obey or disobey his laws? Is a master architect less in control because he designs a structure with doors that can be opened or closed? No, his sovereignty is so complete that it **encompasses the free choices of his creatures** within His overarching plan. He can use the free, and even sinful, acts of men—like the selling of Joseph or the crucifixion of Christ—to accomplish His good and redemptive purposes without being the author of their sin. God's sovereignty is not a cosmic puppetry; it is the wise, powerful, and righteous governance of a universe in which He has sovereignly decreed that human choices are real and have eternal consequences.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 1:1, Genesis 6:5-8, Genesis 18:16-33, Genesis 22, Genesis 50:20, 2 Samuel 24:13-14, 1 Chronicles 29:10-20, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 23, Psalm 51:4, Psalm 139:1-6, Proverbs 15:3, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 46:10, Joel 2:32, John 6:44, Romans 9:19-21, Romans 11:3, Ephesians 1:11, Titus 3:3-7, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 12:28, James 1:13-15, 1 Peter 1:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** Opponents will argue that if man has a truly free will, then God cannot be truly sovereign, as a human choice could potentially thwart God's plan. They will cite verses like Romans 9:19, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" to argue for a will of God that is always irresistible. This **rebuttal**, however, fails to distinguish between God's **decretive will** (what He decrees will happen, which cannot be thwarted) and His **preceptive will** (what He commands, which can be disobeyed). Jesus' lament over Jerusalem ("how often would I have gathered you... but ye would not!") is a clear example of His preceptive will being resisted. Another **rebuttal** is that if God is not controlling every choice, He cannot guarantee the future. This misunderstands the nature of divine omniscience. God's foreknowledge does not cause an event; it simply knows the event. He knows with perfect certainty every free choice that will ever be made and has woven those choices into His ultimate, unstoppable plan. His sovereignty is not a fragile thing that can be broken by human freedom; it is so magnificent that it incorporates human freedom into its very fabric.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The deterministic view of sovereignty that negates meaningful human choice is a central tenet of **hyper-Calvinism** and is strongly present in many **Reformed Baptist and Presbyterian (PCA, OPC)** traditions. The philosophical underpinnings were laid by **Augustine of Hippo** (post-412 AD), whose system of divine monergism (the idea that God is the sole agent in salvation) effectively minimized the role of the human will. This was a reaction to Pelagianism, which overemphasized human ability. Augustine's view was then systematized by **John Calvin** in the 16th century and further solidified by his successors like **Theodore Beza**. This perspective contrasts sharply with the views of the pre-Augustinian church fathers and other traditions like Wesleyan-Arminianism, which uphold a view of sovereignty that co-exists with human freedom.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:18-21, Ephesians 1:11, Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 21:1, Isaiah 46:10, Daniel 4:35

**Verses of Correction:** Deuteronomy 30:19, Joshua 24:15, Matthew 23:37, John 5:40, Acts 7:51, Revelation 22:17

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that divine sovereignty negates human freedom commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It incorrectly frames the issue as an "either-or" proposition: either God is 100% in control and man has no freedom, or man has freedom and God is not 100% in control. This ignores the biblically consistent third option that God's 100% sovereign control includes His decree that humans have genuine freedom and responsibility. It's like arguing that a chess grandmaster is not in control of the game because his opponent is allowed to make his own moves. The grandmaster's control is so complete that he anticipates and incorporates every possible move of his opponent into his winning strategy.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption rooted in a **mechanistic view of causality, akin to philosophical determinism**. This view, popularized by figures like the Stoics in ancient Greece and later finding its way into theological systems, sees the universe as a closed system of cause and effect. If God is the first cause, then everything that follows must be a necessary effect of His initial action. This philosophical lens forces the relational, personal God of the Bible into the role of a cosmic programmer or a divine watchmaker who sets everything in motion and simply watches it unfold according to a fixed, unchangeable script, stripping the narrative of any genuine drama or relational interaction.

**Question 3. What does it mean that God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and how does this principle apply to salvation?**

**Answer 3. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical principle that God is "no respecter of persons" is a cornerstone of His justice and reveals the universal nature of the gospel invitation. It means that God's judgment and His offer of salvation are not based on the external, arbitrary distinctions that humans value. He does not show partiality based on nationality, ethnicity, social class, wealth, or any other outward status. Peter's profound realization in the house of Cornelius was that the wall between Jew and Gentile had been demolished. The criteria for acceptance with God were not lineage or ritual, but a heart-level response: "in every nation he that **feareth him, and worketh righteousness**, is accepted with him." This principle applies directly to salvation by dismantling any notion of an unconditional, selective election. If God were to choose some individuals for salvation and pass over others for no reason other than His own mysterious pleasure, He would be the ultimate "respecter of persons." But the Bible declares the opposite. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. The terms of salvation—repentance and faith in Christ—are the same for everyone. The invitation is extended to all, and acceptance is granted to anyone, regardless of their background, who meets those universal conditions.

**Scripture References:** Deuteronomy 10:17, Deuteronomy 16:19, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19, Proverbs 24:23-24, Matthew 22:16, Luke 20:21, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Galatians 2:6, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1-13, 1 Peter 1:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A common **rebuttal** is that God's choice of Israel as His "elect" nation proves He *is* a respecter of persons. This argument, however, confuses election for a specific

**service and role in redemptive history** with election for eternal salvation. God chose Abraham and his descendants for the purpose of bringing the Messiah and the oracles of God into the world, a choice that was meant to ultimately bless all nations. It was a choice of function, not of exclusive favoritism for salvation. Another **rebuttal** attempts to redefine "respector of persons" to mean only that God doesn't save people based on their own merit. While it is true that salvation is not based on merit, this redefinition misses the primary meaning of the phrase, which is about impartiality regarding external status (like being a Jew or Gentile). The doctrine of Unconditional Election posits that God chooses one person over their identical neighbor for no discernible reason, which is the very essence of being a respector of persons.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Unconditional Election, which stands in tension with God being "no respector of persons," is a pillar of **Calvinistic theology**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some Baptist churches**. The historical roots of this idea are found in the later theology of **Augustine of Hippo** (c. 412 AD), who argued for a selective predestination in his efforts to combat Pelagianism. This was a marked shift from the pre-Augustinian fathers like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who emphasized God's impartiality. **John Calvin** (1536) adopted and systematized Augustine's view, making it central to Reformed soteriology. This view posits that God's choice in salvation is not based on foreseen faith but on His sovereign, and to human eyes, arbitrary, good pleasure.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:11-16, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Matthew 11:25-27, John 15:16

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1, 1 Peter 1:17, Deuteronomy 10:17, Galatians 3:28

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The attempt to reconcile Unconditional Election with God being "no respector of persons" often involves the **Special Pleading** fallacy. This fallacy occurs when someone applies standards or principles to others while making an exception for their own case. The argument essentially says, "God is impartial and doesn't show favoritism based on human standards... except in the ultimate matter of salvation, where He does show favoritism based on His own secret standard." This is like a judge declaring, "I am impartial and do not favor my friends... except when my friends are on trial, in which case I will acquit them regardless of the evidence." It creates a self-serving exception to a universal rule.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses divine sovereignty with arbitrariness**. It operates on the premise that for God's choice to be truly sovereign, it must be utterly devoid of any condition or reason external to Himself, even a reason like foreseen faith. This leads to the picture of a God who chooses capriciously. The biblical view, however, is that God's sovereignty is always exercised in perfect harmony with His other attributes, including His justice, impartiality, and wisdom. His sovereign choice to save those who believe is not an arbitrary choice; it is a wise and just one, based on the perfect criteria He Himself established.

**Question 4. How does the Bible define the "grace of God"? Is it a force that cannot be resisted, or is it an offer that can be accepted or rejected?**



**Answer 4. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The grace of God, as defined by the whole counsel of Scripture, is the unmerited, undeserved, and benevolent favor of God bestowed upon sinful humanity, supremely expressed in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is the very heart of the gospel. Grace is not, however, a metaphysical, irresistible force that bypasses human volition. It is a **divine, enabling offer** that can be, and often is, resisted. The Bible is replete with evidence for this. Stephen, filled with the Holy Ghost, looked the Sanhedrin in the eye and declared, "Ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). This is not the language of impossibility. Paul pleads with the Corinthian church, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain**" (2 Corinthians 6:1). How can one receive grace "in vain" if it is an irresistible force that always accomplishes its purpose? The very existence of such warnings proves that a response is required. Grace is the power of God that opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, and draws the sinner to Christ, making salvation possible for a will that was formerly in bondage. But it does not turn men into puppets; it turns rebels into willing responders.

**Scripture References:** Psalm 45:2, Psalm 84:11, Proverbs 3:34, Zechariah 4:7, Zechariah 12:10, Luke 2:40, Luke 4:22, John 1:14, John 1:16-17, Acts 4:33, Acts 7:51, Acts 11:23, Acts 15:11, Acts 18:27, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:32, Romans 3:8, Romans 3:24, Romans 4:4, Romans 4:16, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:20-21, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:14-15, Romans 11:5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 5:4, Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:7-8, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:10, Jude 1:4

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** Proponents of irresistible grace will point to verses like John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," arguing that this implies an infallible, irresistible drawing. However, this verse describes a divine certainty, not a mechanical process. It speaks from God's eternal perspective, knowing who will ultimately respond. It doesn't negate the human process of coming. They will also cite Lydia's conversion in Acts 16:14, where "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." They claim this is a clear case of irresistible, regenerating grace. But this is an argument from silence. The text simply says the Lord opened her heart; it does not say He did so irresistibly or that she was entirely passive. Every conversion involves the Lord opening the heart. The question is whether that divine action is coercive or persuasive. The weight of Scripture, especially the direct warnings against resisting grace, points to the latter.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling) is the 'I' in the TULIP acronym, central to **Calvinistic** theology. It is a hallmark of **Reformed and Presbyterian** denominations. This doctrine was systematically formulated by **Augustine of Hippo** (c. 412 AD and after) in his writings against the Pelagians. Augustine argued that due to original sin, the human will is not only damaged but is in complete bondage, unable to choose God unless it is first regenerated by an irresistible act of divine grace. This view was then championed by **John Calvin** in the 16th century and became a defining point of the Reformed faith, distinguishing it from Lutheran, Anabaptist, and later Arminian views on the nature of grace and free will.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:37, John 6:44-45, Acts 16:14, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:13

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 4:2, Proverbs 1:24-26, Isaiah 65:2

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for irresistible grace often employs the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The argument goes like this: "No true recipient of God's grace can resist it." When presented with a biblical example of someone resisting the Holy Spirit (like the Pharisees), the response is, "Well, they weren't *true* recipients of saving grace; they only received common grace." This fallacy protects the original claim by retroactively changing the definition. It's like saying, "No Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge." When shown a Scotsman who does, the retort is, "Ah, but no *true* Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge." It's a way to make a belief unfalsifiable by special pleading.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that views grace as a **metaphysical substance or force rather than a relational disposition**. This is a subtle but critical philosophical error. It reifies grace, turning it from God's personal, persuasive favor into an impersonal, mechanical energy that operates on the soul. This framework is more at home in Greek philosophy, with its abstract forms and forces, than in the relational narrative of the Hebrew Bible. The Bible speaks of God's grace, His lovingkindness, His mercy—personal attributes of a relational being. It does not speak of grace as a quantifiable, irresistible substance that can be infused into a passive object.

#### **Question 5. What is the biblical definition of "mercy," and to whom is it extended?**

**Answer 5. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical definition of mercy is God's tender-hearted compassion, which leads Him to withhold the just punishment that sin deserves. It is the flip side of grace; while grace gives us a gift we have not earned (salvation), mercy spares us from a penalty we have earned (damnation). The Bible describes God's mercy as rich, great, plenteous, and everlasting. A key aspect of His mercy is its universal availability. Psalm 145:9 declares, "The LORD is good to all; and his **tender mercies are over all his works**." This establishes that God's merciful disposition is not a selective attribute reserved for a few. However, the *application* of His saving mercy is conditional. It is extended to those who fear Him, to those who trust in Him, and most pointedly, to those who repent and turn from their sin. When God says in Romans 9, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," He is not declaring an arbitrary, capricious selection. He is asserting His sovereign right to set the terms for mercy. And what are those terms? He has chosen to extend His saving mercy to all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to Him through faith in the atoning work of His Son, Jesus Christ. His mercy is not a lottery; it is a fountain available to all who are thirsty.

**Scripture References:** Exodus 34:6-7, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 86:15-16, Psalm 103:2-4, Psalm 103:7-8, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 145:9, Isaiah 55:7, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Luke 1:77, Romans 9:15, Romans 9:18, Ephesians 2:4, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** will be an appeal to Romans 9:18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This is presented as the definitive proof that God's mercy is selective and unconditional. This argument, however, rips the

verse from its context. Paul is explaining why God was justified in setting aside the majority of national Israel (who were seeking righteousness by works) and extending His mercy to the Gentiles (who were responding by faith). The point is not about God's eternal decree for individuals, but His sovereign right to administer His redemptive plan in history. He is sovereign over the *terms* of mercy. The "whom he will" is not arbitrary; the "will" of God, as revealed throughout Scripture, is to have mercy on the repentant and believing heart, regardless of their ethnicity or background. The verse is a defense of God's right to include the Gentiles, not a declaration of His right to exclude individuals without cause.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This view of mercy as a selective, irresistible gift only for the elect is central to **high-Calvinist** theology, found in denominations like the **Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)**, the **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**, and **many Reformed Baptist churches**. The doctrine's architect is **Augustine of Hippo** (post-412 AD), who, in his arguments against Pelagius, concluded that since all humanity is a "mass of perdition," God is under no obligation to show mercy to anyone. Therefore, His choice to show mercy to some (the elect) is an act of pure, unconditional, and selective grace, while justly leaving the rest in their sin. This Augustinian formulation was adopted and powerfully articulated by **John Calvin** in the 16th century, becoming a bedrock of Reformed theology.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:15-18, Romans 11:32, Exodus 33:19

**Verses of Correction:** Psalm 145:9, Ezekiel 33:11, Titus 3:5, Luke 6:36, James 2:13, Micah 7:18, Lamentations 3:22-23

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for selective mercy commits the **Fallacy of Composition**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of a part is true for the whole. The argument takes one part of God's character—His sovereignty—and makes it the defining attribute for the whole, forcing all His other attributes, like His universal goodness and mercy, to be reinterpreted through that single lens. It's like looking at the engine of a car and concluding the entire purpose of the car is to burn fuel, ignoring the steering wheel, the seats, and the brakes. The Bible presents a composite picture of God, whose sovereignty, justice, and mercy work in perfect, harmonious unity, not in opposition to one another.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views mercy as a finite commodity rather than an infinite attribute**. This philosophical error treats God's mercy as if it were a limited resource that must be carefully rationed out. If He gives it to one person, there is less for another. The Bible, however, portrays God's mercy as an overflowing, inexhaustible fountain. His mercy is "new every morning." The decision to extend saving mercy to one person does not diminish His ability or willingness to extend it to another. The limitation is not on God's supply of mercy, but on man's willingness to receive it.

**Question 6. According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, what were the immediate and long-term consequences of Adam's sin for humanity?**



**Answer 6. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Adam's sin, as detailed in Genesis 3 and theologically explained in Romans 5, was a cataclysmic event that fractured creation and plunged humanity into a state of sin and death. The immediate consequences were spiritual alienation from God, the introduction of shame and fear, and a curse upon both humanity and the ground itself. The long-term consequences are universal and profound. Romans 5:12 states, "by one man sin entered into the world, and **death by sin**; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This means every human being now inherits a fallen nature—a predisposition toward sin—and is subject to physical death. However, it is critical to understand what is and is not inherited. We inherit a sinful nature and the consequence of death, but we **do not inherit the guilt of Adam's specific act**. The Bible is clear on individual accountability. Ezekiel 18:20 states, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." We are condemned for our own sins, which spring from our inherited fallen nature, not for Adam's original transgression. The idea that we are born guilty and already damned because of Adam is a misreading of the text.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 3:1-24, Genesis 6:5, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:9-18, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Ephesians 2:1-3, Hebrews 9:27

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** will focus on Romans 5:18-19, which says, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" and "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." This is presented as proof that all are born legally guilty and condemned for Adam's sin. This interpretation, however, fails to see the parallel structure of the passage. Paul is contrasting the work of Adam with the work of Christ. Just as Adam's act brought the *consequence* of condemnation and a sinful state to all, so Christ's act brings the *offer* of justification and life to all. The provision of righteousness is available to all, but it must be received by faith. Similarly, the condemnation from Adam is a universal state into which we are born, but our final judgment is based on our own response to that state. Being "made sinners" refers to our constitution, our nature, not to a legal imputation of Adam's specific guilt.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of "Original Sin," specifically the idea of inherited guilt (as opposed to just a fallen nature), is a cornerstone of **Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. This doctrine was most forcefully and systematically developed by **Augustine of Hippo** around **412 AD**. He taught that all of humanity was "seminally present" in Adam and thus participated in his sin, inheriting both his corrupted nature and his guilt. This Augustinian view became the dominant position in Western Christianity. It stands in contrast to the Eastern Orthodox view and the earlier views of many church fathers, who taught an inherited corruption and mortality but not an inherited guilt.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18-19, Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:3

**Verses of Correction:** Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:16, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Romans 7:9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for inherited guilt often relies on the **Fallacy of Equivocation**. This fallacy occurs when a key term is used with two or more different meanings in the same argument. The word "death" in Romans 5 is used to mean both the consequence of sin (physical and spiritual separation) and, by interpretation, a state of "total inability." The phrase

"made sinners" is equivocated to mean both "constituted with a sinful nature" and "made legally guilty of Adam's act." By subtly shifting the meaning of these key terms, the argument builds a conclusion that is not supported by a consistent reading of the text. It's like arguing, "The sign said 'Fine for parking here,' and since it was fine, I parked there." The word "fine" is used with two different meanings.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption based on a **legalistic, forensic model of federal headship that overshadows the biological and relational aspects**. This view treats Adam primarily as a legal representative whose single demerit is automatically imputed to everyone's account, like a class-action lawsuit where everyone is found liable because of the actions of one representative. While there is a representative aspect, the Bible's emphasis is more organic. We are "in Adam" in the sense that we derive our fallen nature from him, just as a tree's branches share the nature of the root. We are not so much legally charged with his crime as we are born with his hereditary disease.

**Question 7. Does the Bible teach that humans are born "totally depraved" and incapable of seeking God, or do they possess a conscience and a knowledge of good and evil?**

**Answer 7. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible teaches that humanity is born with a profoundly corrupt and sinful nature, but it does not teach "Total Depravity" in the sense that humans are incapable of any spiritual response to God. This latter idea is a philosophical extension, not a direct biblical statement. The Scripture is clear about our fallen state: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." However, the Bible also affirms that humans retain two critical faculties. First, as a result of the fall in Genesis 3, man possesses a **knowledge of good and evil**. Second, Romans 2 describes an innate **conscience**, which acts as an internal witness to God's moral law, either "accusing or else excusing" a person's actions. It is this God-given moral awareness that the Holy Spirit uses to convict the world of sin. If man were truly like a stone or a corpse, utterly incapable of perceiving or responding to spiritual truth, then God's universal commands to "seek the LORD," "choose life," and "repent" would be a cruel and meaningless charade. The biblical position is that man is spiritually dead in his legal standing before God and cannot save himself, but he is not a moral automaton. He retains the capacity to respond when God's grace initiates and draws him.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 3:22, Genesis 42:21, 2 Samuel 24:10, Job 27:6, Proverbs 20:27, Matthew 27:3, Acts 2:37, Acts 24:16, Romans 2:14-15, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 4:2, Titus 1:15

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** Proponents of Total Depravity will cite verses like Romans 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," and 1 Corinthians 2:14, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These verses, they argue, prove total inability. However, this interpretation takes the verses to an extreme that their context does not support. Romans 3 is a declaration of universal *guilt*, not universal *inability*. It describes what man does in his fallen state when left to himself, not what he is incapable of doing when confronted by the grace of God. 1 Corinthians 2:14 describes the "natural man" without the aid of the Holy Spirit. It does not negate

the fact that the Spirit can and does illuminate the minds of the unregenerate to understand the gospel. These verses describe the problem to which God's drawing grace is the solution.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Total Depravity (or Total Inability) is the 'T' in the TULIP acronym and is a foundational doctrine of **Calvinism**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some hyper-Calvinistic Baptist churches**. While the seeds of this idea are in **Augustine's** (c. 412 AD) writings on original sin, it was **John Calvin** (1536) and his successors who developed it into a systematic doctrine of man's absolute inability to contribute anything to his salvation, including the act of faith, unless he is first irresistibly regenerated. This stands in contrast to the Arminian view of "prevenient grace," which holds that God's grace restores to all people the ability to respond to the gospel.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 3:10-12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, John 6:44, John 6:65, Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1-3

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 2:14-15, Acts 10:1-4, Acts 17:27, John 1:9, Matthew 7:7-8, Revelation 3:20

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for Total Depravity often commits the **Fallacy of the Single Cause** (also known as oversimplification). It takes the complex problem of human sinfulness and reduces it to a single cause: a supposed metaphysical inability to respond. It ignores other contributing factors acknowledged in Scripture, such as a rebellious will, a love for darkness, spiritual blindness caused by Satan, and the deceitfulness of sin. The Bible presents a multifaceted diagnosis of the human condition. By reducing it to the single, simple cause of "inability," the doctrine creates a neat philosophical system but fails to capture the full, complex reality described in the Bible. It's like a doctor diagnosing every illness as simply "a lack of health" without investigating the specific virus or injury.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses a moral inclination with a metaphysical incapacity**. This is a category error. The Bible describes humanity's problem in moral terms: we are rebellious, we love darkness, our hearts are deceitful. We are unwilling. The doctrine of Total Inability translates this moral unwillingness into a metaphysical, constitutional *inability*, as if a component of the human soul required for response is missing or broken beyond repair. This shifts the problem from the realm of personal responsibility and rebellion to the realm of constitutional defect, which ultimately traces back to the Creator's design.

### **Question 8. How does the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 challenge the idea that an unregenerate person cannot perform acts that are pleasing to God?**

**Answer 8. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The story of Cornelius the centurion in Acts 10 serves as a direct and powerful biblical refutation of the rigid doctrine that an unregenerate person is incapable of performing any act that is pleasing to God. Before Cornelius had ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Apostle Peter, he is described in the most positive terms. He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The critical point is God's response to these actions. An angel



appears to Cornelius and says, "Thy prayers and thine alms are **come up for a memorial before God.**" This is an explicit statement of divine approval. God saw, remembered, and approved of the sincere, God-fearing actions of this unsaved Gentile. While these acts of piety did not and could not save him—he still needed to hear the "words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"—they demonstrate that the heart of an unregenerate person can be oriented toward God and produce actions that He recognizes as good. This account shatters the framework of Total Inability, which insists that every act of the unsaved is nothing but "filthy rags." Cornelius proves that a person can seek God, and that God, in His grace, responds to that seeking by providing the very gospel that leads to salvation.

**Scripture References:** Acts 10:1-48, Acts 11:13-14, Romans 2:14-15, Matthew 7:7-8, Acts 17:27

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The common **rebuttal** is to claim that Cornelius must have been a "regenerate Old Testament saint" or that his good works were the result of a special, irresistible grace that had already regenerated him, even though he hadn't heard the gospel. This is an argument from silence and an act of special pleading, designed to protect the theological system. The text gives no indication that Cornelius was already saved; in fact, the angel explicitly tells him that Peter will give him the words "whereby thou... shalt be saved," indicating his salvation was a future event, contingent on hearing and believing the gospel. To argue he was already regenerate is to contradict the plain narrative. Another **rebuttal** is to dismiss his works as having no ultimate value. While it's true they didn't earn his salvation, to say God was not pleased by them is to contradict the angel's statement that they came up as a "memorial before God." God was pleased with his sincere heart, which is why He graciously sent him the means of salvation.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The idea that the unregenerate are incapable of any good is a core component of **high-Calvinist** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This stems from the doctrine of Total Depravity, which asserts that the depravity of man is so extensive that it renders him unable to do anything to please God. This doctrine was formalized by **John Calvin** in the 16th century, building on the later work of **Augustine**. They argued that without prior regeneration, any seemingly good work is still rooted in a sinful nature and is therefore sinful in God's sight. The story of Cornelius presents a significant challenge to this rigid formulation, which is why systematic theologians must resort to explaining it away with unstated assumptions.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Isaiah 64:6, Romans 14:23, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 8:8

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 10:4, Acts 10:31, Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:6-7, Romans 2:10, Mark 12:33-34

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that Cornelius's good works were not actually good in God's sight employs the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. Initially, the standard is that the unregenerate can do no good. When presented with the clear example of Cornelius, whose prayers and alms were a "memorial before God," the goalpost is moved. The new argument becomes, "Well, they weren't *savingly* good," or "He must have already been regenerate." This fallacy changes the criteria for the argument mid-stream in order to dismiss inconvenient evidence. It's like claiming a basketball player can't score, and when he scores a basket, you say, "Well, that wasn't a *championship-winning* basket."

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that operates on a **strictly binary, all-or-nothing view of human morality**. This philosophical position fails to recognize nuance. In this framework, an action is either perfectly holy (and thus only possible for the regenerate) or utterly sinful. It does not allow for the biblical category of a sincere, God-fearing, yet unsaved person whose actions, while not meriting salvation, are still recognized by God as righteous in their own context. The Bible presents a more complex picture, acknowledging "civil righteousness" and the reality of a conscience that can lead even an unbeliever to do things that are objectively good and in accordance with God's law.

### **Question 9. What is the purpose of the law of Moses, according to Paul in Galatians and Romans?**

**Answer 9. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** According to the Apostle Paul's meticulous arguments in Galatians and Romans, the Law of Moses was never intended by God to be a means of justification or salvation. Its primary purpose was to function as a divine diagnostic tool. The Law is a perfect mirror that reveals the true nature of sin and the utter sinfulness of humanity. Paul states that "by the law is the **knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20). It was given to stop every mouth and prove the whole world guilty before God. A second, related purpose was to serve as a temporary guardian or "schoolmaster" to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). By showing us our inability to achieve righteousness on our own and by revealing the just condemnation we are under, the Law was designed to make us despair of our own efforts and flee to Christ for the grace and mercy we desperately need. It was added "because of transgressions, **till the seed should come** to whom the promise was made," that seed being Christ. Now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under that schoolmaster. The Law, therefore, diagnoses the disease of sin with perfect accuracy but provides no cure; the cure is found only in the gospel of grace.

**Scripture References:** Romans 3:19-20, Romans 3:27-28, Romans 4:15, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:7-13, Romans 10:4, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 2:19, Galatians 3:10-13, Galatians 3:19-25, 1 Timothy 1:8-9

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A common **rebuttal** is to argue that while we are not saved by the works of the law, the moral aspects of the law, particularly the Ten Commandments, are still a binding rule of life for the Christian. This view, often called the "third use of the law," suggests it serves as a guide for sanctification. While it is true that nine of the Ten Commandments are reaffirmed in the New Testament, they are not binding on the Christian *because* they are part of the Mosaic Law. They are binding because they are the commandments of Christ. Paul is clear that the Christian is "not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14) and is "dead to the law" (Romans 7:4). To place a believer back under the Law of Moses, even just its "moral" part, is to misunderstand its purpose and to risk falling from grace, as Paul warns the Galatians. The Christian's rule of life is the law of Christ, which is fulfilled by love.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The idea of dividing the Law into "ceremonial, civil, and moral" categories, and then claiming the moral law (the Ten Commandments) is still binding on Christians, is a hallmark of **Reformed and Presbyterian** theology. This framework was systematically developed by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes* (1536) as a way to maintain the authority

of the Ten Commandments within a grace-based system. This formulation, however, is a theological construct not explicitly found in Scripture. Paul consistently speaks of "the law" as a unified whole, which has been fulfilled in Christ. Other groups, like **Seventh-day Adventists**, take this further by insisting on the binding nature of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath, which creates even greater tension with Paul's teachings on the New Covenant.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Matthew 5:17-18, Romans 3:31, Romans 7:12, 1 Timothy 1:8, James 2:10-11

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 6:14, Romans 7:4-6, Romans 10:4, Galatians 3:24-25, Galatians 5:18, 2 Corinthians 3:6-11, Hebrews 8:13

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for the "third use of the law" often commits the **Fallacy of Division**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of the whole must also be true of its parts. The argument assumes that because the *principles* of morality found in the Ten Commandments are timeless, the *covenantal code* of the Ten Commandments itself must also be timelessly binding. It fails to recognize that the code itself was part of a specific covenant (the Mosaic Covenant) that has been superseded. It's like arguing that because the principles of good sportsmanship in the 1920 rulebook for baseball are still valid, that entire 1920 rulebook is still in effect for today's games, ignoring the new, updated rulebook.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **fails to properly distinguish between a positive law and a natural law**. A positive law is a specific code given to a specific people at a specific time (e.g., the Law of Moses). A natural law is a universal moral principle written on the human heart (as described in Romans 2). The Ten Commandments are the codification of natural law principles within the specific positive law of the Old Covenant. The error is to confuse the temporary code with the eternal principles. The code is abolished, but the principles of love for God and neighbor, which it reflected, endure and are fulfilled in the higher "law of Christ."

**Question 10. If the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), does this refer to spiritual inability or to condemnation and physical death?**

**Answer 10. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The solemn declaration that "the wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23 refers directly and powerfully to **condemnation and the resulting separation from God**, which manifests as both physical and spiritual death. It is a legal and relational term, not a metaphysical one. "Wages" is a term of commerce; it is what one has earned through their work. The work of sin earns the just payment of death. This death has three aspects in Scripture: spiritual death (present alienation from the life of God, as described in Ephesians 2:1), physical death (the separation of the soul and spirit from the body), and the "second death" (the ultimate, eternal punishment in the lake of fire, as described in Revelation 20:14). To interpret "death" in this context as "spiritual inability" is to import a philosophical concept into a straightforward biblical statement. The Bible's narrative is not about a constitutional incapacity, but about a legal and moral reality: sin leads to just condemnation. A prisoner on death row is legally "dead" and separated from society, but he is not incapable of hearing and responding to a



pardon. Likewise, the sinner is condemned, but is not incapable of hearing and responding to the gospel of grace.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 2:17, Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13, James 1:15, Revelation 20:14, Revelation 21:8

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to link the "death" of Romans 6:23 with the state of being "dead in trespasses and sins" from Ephesians 2:1. The argument is that a "dead" man cannot do anything, therefore this death must mean total inability to respond. This **rebuttal** rests on taking a metaphor too literally and creating a false equivalence. The "death" in Ephesians 2 is a metaphor for spiritual alienation and condemnation, not for a lack of consciousness or volition. The very people described as "dead" in verse 1 are described as "walking" according to the course of this world in verse 2. Dead men do not walk. Paul is using a powerful metaphor to describe their spiritual state of separation from God, not to make a clinical statement about their metaphysical capacities. The wages of sin is a just sentence, not a constitutional paralysis.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of "death" as "total inability" is a foundational assumption of **Calvinistic** theology, necessary to support the doctrine of Total Depravity. This view is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and hyper-Calvinistic** circles. The theological framework was constructed by **Augustine** (c. 412 AD) and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536). They argued that the "death" passed down from Adam was so absolute that it destroyed the faculty of the will to choose spiritual good, thus making irresistible grace a logical necessity for salvation. This interpretation is a philosophical inference, not an exegetical conclusion drawn from the text itself. It redefines a legal term ("wages," "death") to fit a metaphysical presupposition.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Ephesians 2:1-5, Colossians 2:13, John 5:24

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 6:23, James 1:15, Genesis 2:17, Luke 15:24, Luke 15:32, 1 Timothy 5:6

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "death" means "inability" commits the **Fallacy of False Analogy** (specifically, taking a metaphor too literally). It takes the metaphor of being "dead in sin" and treats it as a literal, one-to-one correspondence with physical death. A physically dead person cannot respond, therefore, the argument goes, a spiritually dead person cannot respond. But metaphors are not meant to be pressed into service with this kind of wooden literalism. As shown in Ephesians 2, the "dead" are still "walking," "fulfilling desires," and "having their conversation." The analogy is meant to convey the gravity of their separation from God, not to define their metaphysical capacities. It's a flawed comparison that ignores the limits of the metaphor.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges a metaphysical definition over a legal one**. It takes the biblical concept of "death," which is primarily presented as a legal penalty and a relational separation, and reinterprets it through the lens of metaphysics, turning it into a statement about the essential nature or constitution of the human soul. This shift from the legal to the metaphysical is a classic philosophical move that abstracts the text from its narrative and covenantal context. It

asks "What is the *nature* of this death?" instead of "What is the *meaning* of this death in the story of God's judgment and redemption?"

## The Gospel and the Atonement

### Question 11. According to 1 Corinthians 15, what are the essential components of the Gospel message that Paul preached?

**Answer 11. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, lays down the architectural blueprint of the Gospel with absolute precision, declaring it to be the very foundation upon which the church stands. This is not a message he invented, but one he "received" and "delivered." The essential, non-negotiable components are a set of three historical, verifiable facts, each validated by the Old Testament scriptures. First, "**Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.**" This is the bedrock: His death was not a martyr's tragedy but a purposeful, substitutionary atonement, foretold by the prophets. It was a death *for us*. Second, "**he was buried.**" This is the crucial, often-neglected proof that His death was real. A phantom does not need a tomb. The burial confirms the finality of His sacrifice, setting the stage for the miracle to follow. Third, and most gloriously, "**he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.**" This is the vindication of His person and the victory over sin and death. It is the receipt for the payment He made on the cross. Paul is emphatic that these three pillars—the atoning death, the verifying burial, and the victorious resurrection—are the gospel "by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." Any message that alters, adds to, or subtracts from this core is, by definition, not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Scripture References:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Romans 1:1-4, Luke 24:44-47, Acts 2:22-36, Acts 10:38-43, Acts 13:26-39

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** One common **rebuttal** is to add human response as an essential component *of the gospel itself*. For example, some would say the gospel is "Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and our repentance and faith." While repentance and faith are the necessary *response* to the gospel, Paul defines the gospel as the objective facts about Christ's work. The gospel is the good news of what *He* has done; faith is how we receive it. Conflating the two confuses the message with the response. Another **rebuttal** comes from groups that add their own unique doctrines to the gospel. For instance, some might say the gospel includes adherence to a specific day of worship or the teachings of a modern prophet. Paul preemptively refutes this in Galatians 1:8, stating that if anyone, even an angel from heaven, preaches any other gospel, "let him be accursed." The gospel is a closed set of historical facts, not an open-ended theological system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** While most Christian denominations would affirm these core facts, the error often comes in addition or subtraction. **Roman Catholicism**, for example, while affirming the creed, adds the necessity of sacraments administered by the church as instrumental for salvation, thus creating "another gospel" of faith plus works. Some groups, like **Seventh-day Adventists**, add their own distinctive doctrines (like the Investigative Judgment and the Sabbath) as central to the "everlasting gospel," which shifts the focus from the finished work of Christ on the cross. The historical tendency to add to the simple, powerful gospel of 1 Corinthians 15 is a

recurring error that Paul vehemently opposed in his own day, particularly with the Judaizers who sought to add the works of the law to the gospel of grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For adding works) James 2:24, Matthew 19:17; (For adding Sabbath) Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27-28

**Verses of Correction:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Galatians 1:6-9, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The error of adding to the gospel often involves the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy (also known as raising the bar). The Bible sets the goalpost for the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. When a group adds another requirement, like a specific work or a dietary law, they are moving the goalpost. The argument becomes, "Yes, you must believe in Christ's death and resurrection... *and* you must also do X." This fallacy illegitimately alters the original terms of the debate. It's like agreeing to a race of 100 meters, and then as you approach the finish line, the official says, "Actually, you also have to climb this wall to win." The original, simple terms have been changed.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a cooperative project rather than a finished accomplishment**. This philosophical error stems from human pride and the innate desire to contribute to one's own rescue. It reframes the gospel from being a declaration of what God has *done* for us in Christ, to being an instruction manual for what we must *do* for God. This shifts the entire framework from one of grace and reception to one of effort and merit. It is the difference between being rescued from a raging river by a helicopter (a finished work you simply accept) and being thrown a rope and told to help pull yourself to shore (a cooperative project).

### **Question 12. How do the "whosoever" passages in the Bible (e.g., John 3:16, Romans 10:13) inform our understanding of the scope of the Gospel invitation?**

**Answer 12. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "whosoever" passages are the Bible's great, resounding declaration that the gospel invitation is **universal, unrestricted, and available to every single person**. When John 3:16 proclaims that God gave His Son that "**whosoever** believeth in him should not perish," and Romans 10:13 thunders, "**whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," these are not ambiguous statements. They are divine guarantees that demolish any man-made theological wall built to limit the scope of God's grace. The word "whosoever" is a universal solvent that dissolves the categories of a limited atonement. It means what it says. It does not mean "whosoever of the elect." It does not mean "whosoever is irresistibly drawn." It means any person, from any nation, in any condition, who hears the call and responds in faith, will be saved. These verses reveal the sincere, bona fide nature of the gospel offer. God is not playing a cruel game, inviting all to a feast prepared only for a few. The invitation is universal because the provision—the atoning death of Christ—is sufficient for all. The gate is open to all who will enter.

**Scripture References:** John 3:15-16, John 4:14, John 11:26, John 12:46, Acts 2:21, Acts 10:43, Romans 9:33, Romans 10:11, Romans 10:13, 1 John 4:15, Revelation 22:17



**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that "whosoever" must be interpreted in light of other verses that speak of election. The argument is that "whosoever" only refers to the elect who are scattered among all the nations. So, it means "whosoever *of the elect* believes." This, however, is a classic case of eisegesis—reading a preconceived system into the text. The word "whosoever" in both Greek and English is inherently universal and requires no such qualification. To limit its meaning is to do violence to the plain sense of the language. Another **rebuttal** is that while the *call* is universal, the *ability* to respond is limited to the elect. But this again creates an insincere offer. What good is an invitation to a feast for a man who is bound and gagged and cannot possibly attend? The "whosoever" passages presuppose not only a universal offer but also a sufficient grace that enables a response from anyone who hears.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The effort to limit the plain meaning of "whosoever" is a necessary tactic for theological systems built on the doctrine of Limited Atonement, the 'L' in the TULIP of **Calvinism**. This view is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some Sovereign Grace Baptist churches**. The theological necessity to reinterpret these universal passages stems directly from the system created by **John Calvin** (1536), which followed the deterministic logic of **Augustine**. If God has only elected some to salvation, then Christ could only have died for those same people, and therefore any universal-sounding offer in the Bible must be reinterpreted to fit the logic of the system. This stands in contrast to the plain reading of the text embraced by Arminians, Wesleyans, and most Anabaptists.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:37, John 17:9, Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:4

**Verses of Correction:** John 3:16, Romans 10:13, Revelation 22:17, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The reinterpretation of "whosoever" to mean "whosoever of the elect" is a clear example of the **Begging the Question** fallacy (also known as circular reasoning). The argument's premise assumes the very conclusion it is trying to prove. The reasoning is: "The Bible teaches that only the elect can be saved. This verse says 'whosoever' can be saved. Therefore, 'whosoever' must mean 'whosoever of the elect'." The conclusion (only the elect can be saved) is used to define the terms of the evidence, rather than letting the evidence define the conclusion. It's like saying, "My friend is always honest. My friend told me he is a unicorn. Therefore, he must be a unicorn, because my friend is always honest."

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **prioritizes logical consistency within a closed system over the plain meaning of the biblical text**. This is a philosophical error where the man-made system becomes the grid through which the Bible is read. If a verse doesn't fit the system, the verse must be reinterpreted, not the system questioned. This approach elevates human reason and systematic theology above divine revelation. It presumes that God's thoughts must conform to our logical syllogisms. The Bible, however, often presents truths in tension or paradox, and our responsibility is to believe what it says, even if it doesn't fit neatly into our philosophical boxes.

**Question 13. What is the meaning of Christ's death being a "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)?**

**Answer 13. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The declaration in 1 John 2:2 is one of the most explicit and powerful statements in all of Scripture regarding the unlimited sufficiency of Christ's atonement. A "propitiation" is a sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God against sin. John, writing to believers, first assures them that Jesus is the propitiation for "our sins." But then, as if to preempt any possible misunderstanding, he immediately adds the clarifying clause: "**and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**" The structure of this sentence is designed to be universally inclusive. It erects an impenetrable wall against any doctrine of a limited or particular atonement. The sacrifice of Christ was of such infinite value that it is sufficient to cover the sins of every person who has ever lived. While the *application* of this atonement is limited to those who believe, the *provision* of the atonement is for the "whole world." God has provided a remedy sufficient to heal every sinner; the tragedy is that many refuse to take it. This verse, standing in its plain, grammatical sense, is a death blow to the idea that Christ only died for a select few.

**Scripture References:** 1 John 2:2, John 1:29, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:9

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** Adherents of limited atonement have developed several **rebuttals** to neutralize this verse. One is to argue that "the whole world" does not mean every single person, but rather "the elect from all over the world," both Jew and Gentile. This interpretation, however, is forced and unnatural. When the Bible wants to say "the elect," it has words for it. Here, it uses the most universal term possible. Another **rebuttal** is to distinguish between the "sufficiency" and "efficiency" of the atonement, arguing it was sufficient for all but only efficient for the elect. But this is precisely what the non-Calvinist position is! The verse itself is teaching unlimited sufficiency. The most common **rebuttal** is to claim that if Christ died for everyone and not everyone is saved, then God's purpose failed and Christ's blood was wasted on the non-elect. This argument misunderstands the nature of the atonement. It was a legal provision made available to all, conditional upon faith. A pardon offered to a prisoner is not "wasted" if the prisoner refuses to accept it; the failure lies with the recipient, not the provider.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption) is the 'L' in the TULIP acronym and a central, though often controversial, tenet of **Calvinism**. It is taught in most **Reformed and Presbyterian** denominations. The doctrine follows logically from the premise of Unconditional Election: if God has only chosen to save the elect, then it would be illogical for Christ to die for the non-elect. This systematic logic was developed by **John Calvin** (1536) and his followers, particularly **Theodore Beza**, and was formally enshrined as dogma at the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619). This view is a point of significant contention, even among those who hold to other aspects of Calvinism, as it directly confronts so many universal-sounding passages in Scripture.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:11, John 10:15, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25, Matthew 1:21

**Verses of Correction:** 1 John 2:2, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Timothy 4:10, 2 Corinthians 5:15, John 3:16

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that a universal atonement means Christ's blood was "wasted" on the non-elect commits the **Straw Man** fallacy. It misrepresents the opposing position to make it easier to attack. The non-Calvinist position is not that Christ's death automatically saves everyone. The position is that Christ's death made a sufficient legal provision for the salvation of everyone, a provision that is applied upon the condition of faith. The "wasted blood" argument attacks a position that no one actually holds (universalism) in order to avoid dealing with the actual position being argued (unlimited sufficiency). It's like arguing against a proposal to build a public library by saying, "You want to force everyone to read books they don't like," which misrepresents the proposal entirely.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the atonement through a commercial or quantitative lens**. This philosophical error treats the atonement like a precise financial transaction: Christ had a certain amount of "redemptive value" in His death, and it was paid out to purchase a specific number of people. If He paid for someone who is ultimately not saved, then part of the payment was lost or wasted. The Bible, however, presents the atonement in legal and relational terms. It was a sacrifice of infinite intrinsic value, sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice for all sin. It is a provision, a remedy, a pardon offered, not a commercial purchase of specific individuals.

**Question 14. How does the command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) align with the doctrine of a limited atonement?**

**Answer 14. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Great Commission to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to **every creature**" is fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with the doctrine of a limited atonement. The command is universal, absolute, and without qualification. It presupposes that the message being preached is a genuine possibility for every single person who hears it. If, however, Christ's atoning death was only intended for a select group of elect, then the gospel is not actually "good news" for every creature. For the vast majority of humanity (the non-elect), it is not good news at all; it is irrelevant news, a story of a salvation that was never made available to them. How can a missionary, with integrity, stand before a crowd and offer Christ freely to all, knowing that for most of them, Christ did not die? It turns the sincere, universal invitation of the gospel into a **divine charade**. The only way the command to preach to every creature aligns with the character of a truthful God is if the provision of salvation is as universal as the command to proclaim it. The atonement is sufficient for all, therefore the offer must be made to all.

**Scripture References:** Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14-18, Colossians 1:23

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that we preach to everyone because we do not know who the elect are. We cast the net wide, and God will ensure that His elect who are in the net will be brought in. While this is true in practice (we don't know who is elect), it doesn't solve the underlying problem of sincerity. The issue is not our ignorance, but God's command. The command is to offer a free gift. If the gift doesn't exist for the person being offered, the offer itself is disingenuous, regardless of the proclaimer's knowledge. Another **rebuttal** is that the gospel call serves a secondary purpose for the non-elect: it increases their condemnation for rejecting a



salvation they couldn't have accepted anyway. This portrays a God who commands the preaching of the gospel not out of a desire to save, but out of a desire to heap more guilt upon the damned, a view that is monstrous and contrary to the God of all grace.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The tension between the Great Commission and Limited Atonement is a significant point of internal conflict within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches uphold both doctrines, they must engage in significant theological reasoning to reconcile them. This tension led to the development of **Amyraldianism** (or Four-Point Calvinism) by **Moyse Amyraut** in the 17th century. Amyraut sought to resolve the issue by proposing a "hypothetical universalism," where Christ's death was sufficient for all, but only applied to the elect. While this view was condemned by more staunch Calvinists at the time, it demonstrates the long-standing difficulty of harmonizing a universal command with a particular provision.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For God's hidden purposes) Romans 11:33, Deuteronomy 29:29; (For God's sovereignty in drawing) John 6:44

**Verses of Correction:** Mark 16:15, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, Matthew 28:19

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that we preach to all because we don't know who the elect are commits the **Red Herring** fallacy. It diverts attention from the core issue, which is the sincerity of God's offer, to a different issue, which is our ignorance. The central problem is not about our knowledge, but about the nature of the offer itself. Is the gospel a bona fide offer for every person who hears it? The "we don't know who is elect" argument avoids answering this question directly by changing the subject. It's like being asked, "Is this medicine you're selling a real cure?" and responding, "I sell it to everyone because I don't know who is actually sick." The response doesn't address the medicine's efficacy.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **separates God's command from His character**. It treats the Great Commission as a bare, sovereign command that must be obeyed, without considering whether that command is consistent with the revealed character of God as truthful and loving. A truthful God would not command His servants to make a false offer. A loving God would not mock the non-elect with an unattainable salvation. The philosophical error is to view God's will as raw, unscrutable power, rather than as an expression of His perfectly integrated and holy nature. The Bible teaches that what God commands is always a reflection of who God is.

**Question 15. If Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect, what is the purpose of the universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture?**

**Answer 15. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The universal calls to repentance that permeate the Bible are rendered logically incoherent and morally problematic by the doctrine of a limited atonement. God's command at the Areopagus, that He "now commandeth **all men every where to repent**" (Acts 17:30), is a universal directive. Repentance, in the biblical sense, is a turning from sin *to God* for forgiveness. If Christ's atoning sacrifice—the only basis for that forgiveness—was not made for the non-elect, then to what are they turning? It would be a turning

to a God who has made no provision for their sin. It would be like a judge commanding every condemned prisoner to appeal for a pardon, while knowing that he has already decided to grant pardons to only a select few and has thrown away the paperwork for all the rest. The universal command to repent only makes sense if there is a **universal provision for forgiveness** available to all who obey that command. The call is universal because the atonement is sufficient for all. To believe otherwise is to portray God as commanding the impossible and then condemning men for failing to achieve it.

**Scripture References:** Acts 17:30, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 26:20, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, Luke 24:47, 2 Peter 3:9

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is that the call to repent is part of man's general duty to God, regardless of the provision of salvation. All men are obligated to obey God, and their failure to repent (even if they are unable to) is simply another sin for which they are justly condemned. This argument, however, separates repentance from its gospel context. The biblical call to repent is almost always linked to the promise of forgiveness and the coming of the kingdom. It's not an abstract moral duty; it's an invitation to be reconciled to God through Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that the call hardens the non-elect and makes their condemnation more just. This, again, paints a monstrous picture of God, who commands repentance not out of a desire to save, but out of a desire to increase the guilt of the damned. This is contrary to the God who pleads, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This tension is inherent within all **Calvinistic** systems (**Reformed, Presbyterian**, etc.) that hold to a limited atonement. The system's internal logic, which begins with God's sovereign decree of election, necessitates this view. This framework, originating with **Augustine** and formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619), must find a way to account for the universal commands of Scripture. The solution is typically to posit two "wills" in God: His "decretive will" (which saves only the elect) and His "preceptive will" (which commands all to repent). While a theological distinction, it creates the appearance of a God who is working at cross-purposes with Himself, commanding what His decree has made impossible for the majority.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:19-21, Matthew 11:25-26

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 17:30, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, Luke 13:3, 1 Timothy 2:4

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the call to repent serves only to increase the condemnation of the non-elect commits the **Appeal to Spite** fallacy. It attempts to justify a position by appealing to a sense of malice or ill-will, in this case attributing it to God. It suggests that God's motive for a universal command is not grace but the desire to heap more guilt on the damned. This is a character attack used to defend a logically weak position. It avoids the central problem—the sincerity of the offer—by proposing a morally repugnant alternative. It's like arguing that a "Wet Paint" sign is placed on a bench not to keep people from getting dirty, but to give the owner the satisfaction of scolding those who sit on it.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **divorces God's commands from His revealed desires**. It creates a disjunction between what God says He wants (that all should repent and live) and what the system says He has secretly decreed (that most should not be able to repent and will die). This creates a schizophrenic deity. The biblical worldview, however, insists on the integrity of God's character. His commands are an expression of His heart. He commands all to repent because He genuinely desires all to repent and has made a way for that to be possible through the all-sufficient sacrifice of His Son.

**Question 16. What does it mean that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)?**

**Answer 16. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 is one of the most direct and unambiguous expressions of God's universal, benevolent will for the salvation of humanity. It means exactly what it says: God's desire, His disposition, His good pleasure, is for **every single person to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth. This verse, along with its context which speaks of Christ giving Himself "a ransom for all" (v. 6), serves as a powerful anchor for the doctrine of a universal atonement. It reveals the loving heart of the Father, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The word "will" in this verse does not refer to God's decretive will (what He decrees must happen), but to His will of desire. Clearly, not all men are saved, so this "will" can be resisted by human rebellion. But the fact that this is His desire completely undermines any theological system that teaches God has eternally and unconditionally willed for the majority of humanity to be damned. It presents a God who has made a genuine provision for all and sincerely desires the salvation of all.

**Scripture References:** 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, Ezekiel 33:11, John 3:16-17, Titus 2:11

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that "all men" does not mean "every single person," but rather "all kinds of men" or "men from all nations" (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles). While it is true that God desires to save all *types* of people, this interpretation does unnecessary violence to the plain meaning of the word "all." In the immediate context, Paul urges prayer "for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority." No one argues this means we should only pray for "some kings" or "some kinds of rulers." The word "all" is used consistently in its universal sense. To change its meaning in verse 4 is an act of interpretive gerrymandering designed to protect a system. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to the "two wills" of God, claiming His "decretive will" is to save only the elect, while His "preceptive will" desires the salvation of all. This, however, creates a God who is at war with Himself, secretly decreeing the opposite of what He openly desires.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to reinterpret "all men" is a theological necessity for **strict Calvinism**, as taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. The system, as laid out by **John Calvin** (1536) and solidified at the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619), cannot allow for a genuine, universal saving will in God, as it would contradict the doctrines of unconditional election and limited atonement. Therefore, great effort is expended in commentaries and sermons to explain away the plain meaning of this and other universal-sounding texts. This contrasts with the



Arminian, Wesleyan, and Lutheran traditions, which generally take this verse at face value as an expression of God's universal love and desire.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:18, Ephesians 1:11, John 6:37

**Verses of Correction:** 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 33:11, 1 John 2:2, John 12:32

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "all" means "all kinds of" is an example of the **Equivocation** fallacy, where the meaning of a key word is shifted to support a conclusion. The word "all" is used universally in the context ("pray for all men"), but its meaning is suddenly restricted when it comes to salvation in verse 4. This is an inconsistent and self-serving method of interpretation. It's like reading a will that says, "I leave all my possessions to my children," and then arguing that "all my possessions" doesn't mean every single possession, but only "all kinds of possessions," allowing you to exclude the most valuable items. The plain meaning is intentionally obscured to achieve a desired outcome.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God cannot have desires that are not actualized**. This philosophical premise, often rooted in a particular view of omnipotence, insists that if God truly desires something, it must come to pass. Therefore, since not all men are saved, God must not truly desire all men to be saved. The Bible, however, presents a more complex, relational picture. It shows a God who has desires that are resisted by His creatures (e.g., "how often would I have gathered you... but ye would not!"). He has sovereignly granted a degree of freedom to His creation, and He can have genuine desires that are not fulfilled because of their rebellion, without this diminishing His ultimate power or sovereignty.

**Question 17. How does the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) illustrate the nature of God's call and human response?**

**Answer 17. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The parable of the great supper is a masterful illustration of the nature of the divine call, revealing it to be both **sincere in its invitation and resistible in its reception**. The parable begins with a certain man making a great supper and bidding many. This represents God's generous and wide call, initially to the nation of Israel. The invitation is genuine; the feast is prepared and the servants are sent. However, the parable immediately shows that this call is not irresistible. The ones who were first bidden "with one consent began to make excuse." They prioritized their land, their business, and their family over the master's invitation. This demonstrates that human beings have the capacity to refuse the call of God, placing the responsibility for their exclusion squarely on their own choices. The master's response is not to force the original guests to come, but to **widen the circle of invitation**, sending his servant out to the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and then even further to the highways and hedges. This beautifully illustrates the gospel going out to the Gentiles and the outcasts after being rejected by the religious establishment. The parable is a story of a resistible call, a responsible refusal, and a resulting expansion of grace to all who are willing to come.

**Scripture References:** Luke 14:16-24, Matthew 22:1-14, Proverbs 1:24-28, Acts 13:46

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A Calvinistic interpretation might argue that the first group who refused were the non-elect, and their refusal was part of God's eternal decree. The second group, who were compelled to come in, represent the elect being drawn by irresistible grace. This interpretation, however, has to read a great deal into the text. The parable doesn't say the first group was *unable* to come, but that they were *unwilling* to come—they "made excuse." Furthermore, the word "compel" in Luke 14:23 does not necessitate physical or irresistible force. It means to strongly urge or constrain, as one would do when earnestly inviting a guest. It speaks of the urgency and persuasiveness of the call, not its coercive nature. The parable's natural reading is about the contrast between a prideful refusal and a humble acceptance of a genuine offer.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of this parable through a deterministic lens is common in **hyper-Calvinistic** circles. The need to see the "compelling" of the second group as irresistible grace is required by the system laid out by **John Calvin** and his successors. However, many commentators throughout history, including many early church fathers and later figures like **John Wesley** (18th century), have seen this parable as a clear depiction of God's universal offer and humanity's freedom to reject it. Wesley, in particular, used such parables to argue against the Calvinistic doctrines of irresistible grace and limited atonement, emphasizing instead God's desire for all to be saved and the responsibility of each person to respond to His gracious invitation.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Luke 14:23 ("compel them to come in"), Romans 9:18

**Verses of Correction:** Luke 14:18 ("they all with one consent began to make excuse"), Matthew 23:37, Acts 7:51

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The deterministic interpretation of this parable commits the **Contextomy** fallacy (also known as quoting out of context). It focuses heavily on the single word "compel" in verse 23 while downplaying the clear context of the preceding verses, which detail the willful refusal of the first group of guests. By isolating one word and infusing it with a theological meaning ("irresistible force") that the broader narrative does not support, the argument distorts the primary message of the parable. The story is about the transition of the gospel offer from the unwilling to the willing, not about two different kinds of divine mechanics.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's actions must be understood in terms of force and power rather than persuasion and relationship**. This philosophical bias sees divine interaction as a matter of coercion. If God wants something done, He must force it to happen. The Bible, however, consistently portrays God's primary mode of interaction with humanity as relational and persuasive. He reasons with His people, He pleads with them, He sends prophets, He displays wonders—all to woo and win their hearts. The idea of a "compelling" that is actually a loving, urgent persuasion is more consistent with the character of the biblical God than the idea of a metaphysical, irresistible force.

**Question 18. What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel message?**

**Answer 18. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The relationship between hearing the Gospel, repentance, and faith is an inseparable, logical, and chronological sequence that forms the very foundation of conversion. The process is initiated by a divine act: the proclamation of the Gospel. As Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith cometh by **hearing**, and hearing by the word of God." The Gospel—the good news of Christ's atoning death, burial, and resurrection—is the power of God unto salvation, and it must be heard or read. When this message is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit performs His convicting work, leading the hearer to an understanding of their sin and their need for a Savior. The required human response to this divine initiative is twofold, like two sides of the same coin. First, there is **repentance**, which is a change of mind about sin and self, a turning *away* from rebellion and toward God. Second, there is **faith**, which is a trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a turning *to* Him as the only hope for salvation. These two are intrinsically linked; one cannot truly repent without placing faith in Christ, and one cannot have genuine faith in Christ without repenting of their sin. Hearing is the catalyst, and repentance and faith are the unified, life-giving response.

**Scripture References:** Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 11:21, Acts 16:31, Acts 20:21, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 10:14-17, Hebrews 4:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A common **rebuttal** from some theological systems is to reorder the sequence, placing regeneration *before* faith. The argument is that a person must first be irresistibly born again by the Spirit, and only then are they able to repent and believe. This is done to preserve the doctrine of Total Inability. This, however, reverses the biblical order. The Bible says we are "born again... by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23), indicating the Word (the Gospel) is the instrument that produces new birth, not the other way around. It also makes the command to believe problematic. Why command a person to do something (believe) that they are incapable of doing until after something else (regeneration) has been secretly done to them? The biblical sequence is clear: God speaks, the Spirit convicts, man responds in repentance and faith, and God regenerates.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The reordering of salvation to place regeneration before faith is a hallmark of **Calvinistic** theology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This theological sequence, known as the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), was a logical necessity of the system developed by **John Calvin** (1536) and his followers. If man is totally unable to respond, then God must act first monergistically (working alone) to regenerate the sinner, who then, as a consequence of this new nature, will inevitably believe. This view is a significant departure from that of the Anabaptists, Arminians, and most Baptists, who maintain the biblical order of the gospel call preceding the human response of faith, which then results in regeneration.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 3:3, John 6:63, Ephesians 2:5, 1 John 5:1

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, John 20:31, Acts 11:21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that regeneration must precede faith commits the **Affirming the Consequent** fallacy. This is a formal fallacy with the structure: If P, then Q. Q, therefore P. The argument goes: "If a person is regenerate (P), then they will have faith (Q). This person has faith (Q). Therefore, they must be regenerate (P)." While the first premise is true (a



regenerate person will have faith), the conclusion does not logically follow. It doesn't prove that regeneration is the *cause* of faith in a chronological sense. It's like arguing, "If it is raining, the ground will be wet. The ground is wet. Therefore, it must be raining." The ground could be wet for other reasons (sprinklers, a fire hydrant, etc.). Similarly, faith is the God-ordained instrument that leads to the state of regeneration.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the human will as purely passive in the process of conversion**. This philosophical position, rooted in determinism, sees the will not as a faculty of choice that can be persuaded, but as a state of being that must be fundamentally changed before it can act. It treats the soul like a dead battery that must be completely replaced by God before it can power any action, including the act of faith. The Bible, however, presents the will as a faculty that, while fallen and in bondage, can be and is addressed, wooed, and persuaded by the truth of the gospel and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, enabling it to make a genuine response.

### **Question 19. Can a person be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel?**

**Answer 19. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that a person cannot be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel message. The Word of God is presented as the very instrument or seed through which new life is imparted. The Apostle Peter is explicit on this point, stating that believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). James echoes this truth: "Of his own will begat he us **with the word of truth**" (James 1:18). The Gospel is not merely information for the already-regenerate mind to process; it is the life-giving power of God itself. To suggest that regeneration happens in a vacuum, apart from the hearing of the gospel, is to sever the link that Scripture makes plain. The divine order is consistent: the Spirit uses the Word to bring conviction and illumination, which then elicits the response of faith, and in that moment of saving faith, the believer is born again. The idea of a secret, pre-faith regeneration has no scriptural warrant and is a philosophical necessity for a deterministic system, not a biblical reality.

**Scripture References:** 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, Romans 10:14-17, John 20:31, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 3:2, Hebrews 4:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is the argument from Total Inability: a spiritually "dead" person cannot believe, therefore they must be made alive (regenerated) first. This argument, as previously addressed, rests on a faulty, overly literal interpretation of the metaphor of spiritual "death." It ignores the fact that the biblically "dead" are still commanded to hear, repent, and believe. Another **rebuttal** might point to the salvation of infants who die, arguing they are regenerated without hearing the gospel. This, however, is a separate theological category. The Bible is largely silent on the mechanism of infant salvation, but it is clear that for accountable individuals, the normative path to regeneration is through hearing and believing the Word. Using a special case (infants) to define the rule for all others is an invalid line of reasoning. The prescribed path for adults is clear.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of "regeneration precedes faith" is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** traditions. It is the logical outflow of the doctrine of Total Inability. If man is a spiritual corpse, then God must act alone (monergism) to sovereignly regenerate him, after which the person will infallibly exercise faith. This systematic formulation, originating with **Augustine** and developed by **John Calvin** (1536), is necessary to maintain the coherence of the TULIP system. It stands in direct opposition to the teachings of **Anabaptists, Arminians, and most Baptists**, who hold that the gospel call enables a faith response, which then results in the new birth.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 3:3-8, John 5:21, Titus 3:5, 1 John 5:1

**Verses of Correction:** 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, Romans 10:17, John 5:24, Galatians 3:26

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for pre-faith regeneration commits the **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc** fallacy (after this, therefore because of this). The argument observes that all who are saved have been regenerated and have faith, and then incorrectly assumes a specific causal order: that regeneration *must* have happened first to *cause* faith. It confuses correlation with a specific and unproven chronological causation. It's like observing that a fire truck is always present at a big fire and concluding that the fire truck must have arrived first to cause the fire. The biblical evidence points to the opposite causal chain: the hearing of the Word, through the Spirit's power, causes the faith that results in regeneration.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the human soul in purely mechanistic terms**. This philosophical error treats the soul like a machine that is either "on" (regenerate) or "off" (unregenerate). In this view, the machine must be switched "on" by an external force before any of its functions, like "faith," can operate. The Bible, however, presents the soul in relational and organic terms. It is not a machine to be switched on, but a heart to be persuaded, a mind to be illuminated, and a will to be wooed. The Word of God is not a mechanical switch; it is a living seed that, when planted in a heart prepared by the Spirit, germinates into the new life of faith.

**Question 20. How does the Bible define "justification," and is it a one-time declaration or a lifelong process?**

**Answer 20. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Justification, according to the precise legal language of the New Testament, is a **one-time, instantaneous, and irreversible judicial act of God**. It is not a process, but a verdict. It is the moment when God, the righteous Judge, declares a believing sinner to be righteous in His sight. This declaration is not based on the sinner's own works, character, or future potential. It is based entirely on their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through this faith, the perfect righteousness of Christ is **imputed**, or legally credited, to the believer's account. Paul's statement in Romans 8:30 places justification in a sequence of completed, past-tense actions: "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also **justified**: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The use of the past tense is critical. For the believer, justification is not something they are working toward; it is a status they already possess. To confuse justification (our legal standing before God) with bearing fruit (our ongoing growth in following Christ) is a catastrophic error that undermines the very

foundation of grace and replaces the assurance of a finished work with the anxiety of an ongoing performance review.

**Scripture References:** Acts 13:39, Romans 3:24, Romans 3:26, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:5, Romans 5:1, Romans 5:9, Romans 8:30, Romans 8:33-34, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11, Galatians 3:24, Titus 3:7

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The most common **rebuttal** comes from misinterpreting the book of James, particularly James 2:24: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." This is presented as a direct contradiction of Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone. However, Paul and James are not in conflict; they are addressing different problems. Paul is arguing against legalists who believed they could be saved by the works of the Law. James is arguing against libertines who claimed to have faith but had no corresponding works to prove it. Paul is discussing the *root* of justification (faith alone), while James is discussing the *fruit* of justification (works that demonstrate real faith). James is saying that the kind of faith that justifies is a faith that is never "only" in the sense of being alone or barren; it is a living faith that inevitably produces the work of obedience.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine that justification is a lifelong process, rather than a one-time declaration, is a central tenet of **Roman Catholicism**. The **Council of Trent** (1545-1563) explicitly condemned the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone and defined justification as a process of inner renewal and sanctification, infused by grace through the sacraments, through which a person becomes progressively more righteous. This view, which conflates justification and sanctification, is also present in some forms of **Arminian-Wesleyan** theology, which can sometimes blur the line between the two. In contrast, the doctrine of justification as a purely forensic, one-time declaration is a cornerstone of the **Lutheran and Reformed** traditions, who see it as the "article upon which the church stands or falls."

**Verses of Apparent Support:** James 2:21-24, Matthew 7:21, Revelation 22:14

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 3:28, Romans 4:2-5, Romans 5:1, Galatians 2:16, Philippians 3:9, Titus 3:5-7

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that conflates justification and sanctification often commits the **Category Error** fallacy. This fallacy incorrectly assigns something to a category to which it does not belong. Justification and sanctification are two distinct, albeit related, theological categories. Justification is a *legal* category: it changes our standing before God. Sanctification is a *moral* or *transformative* category: it changes our character. To treat them as the same thing is like confusing a marriage certificate (a legal declaration of status) with the ongoing relationship of a marriage (a process of growth and intimacy). The certificate is a one-time event that establishes the status; the relationship is a lifelong process that flows from that status.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's declaration must correspond to an existing internal reality**. This philosophical premise insists that God cannot declare someone "righteous" unless they are, in fact, inherently and personally righteous at that moment. This view struggles with the



concept of legal imputation. The Bible, however, operates on a covenantal and legal framework. God can legally declare us righteous *in Christ* because our sins have been legally paid for by Christ and His perfect righteousness has been legally credited to our account. The declaration creates the new reality, not the other way around. It is a creative, powerful word, like when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

## Election and Predestination

**Question 21. When the New Testament uses the term "elect," is it referring to specific individuals chosen for salvation from eternity, or to the nation of Israel and, by extension, the church?**

**Answer 21. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** When the New Testament speaks of the "elect," it is not using a simple, one-size-fits-all term for individuals predestined to heaven. The meaning is highly dependent on the context, and a failure to trace its usage is the source of great theological error. In the Gospels, when Jesus speaks of the "elect's sake" in the context of the tribulation in Judea, He is clearly referring to His people, the **nation of Israel**. In the epistles, particularly Romans, Paul uses the term to wrestle with the great mystery of his day: how God's promises to His chosen, "elect" nation of Israel could still be true now that the gospel was being accepted by the Gentiles and rejected by most Jews. The term is primarily **corporate and covenantal**. God chose a people for Himself—first, national Israel, to be the vessel of His revelation and the lineage of the Messiah. Now, in the New Covenant, the "elect" is the Church, a "chosen generation" made up of both Jews and Gentiles who are united by faith in Christ. While this corporate body is made up of chosen individuals, the primary emphasis is on the people group, not on a secret roll call of individuals pre-selected for heaven while others were pre-selected for hell.

**Scripture References:** Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:20, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:11, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:28, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 2:9

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** will be to point to verses like Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" and argue that this must refer to individuals, since individuals are the ones who are justified. This is true, but it doesn't prove that the election itself was an unconditional, pre-temporal decree of individuals. The verse is describing the present security of those who are *already* part of the elect body, the church. The question is, how does one become part of that body? The Bible's answer is by faith. Another **rebuttal** is that if election is corporate, it doesn't guarantee individual salvation. This is precisely the point the Bible makes. Being a member of elect Israel did not guarantee salvation, as John the Baptist warned. And Paul warns the grafted-in Gentile believers (the new corporate elect) that they too can be "cut off." The security is in Christ, the true Elect One, and we become part of His elect body by faith.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of "elect" as referring exclusively to individuals unconditionally predestined to salvation is the cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed, Presbyterian churches)**. This interpretation is a necessity for their entire system. It was

systematically developed by **John Calvin** (1536), who built upon the later work of **Augustine**. This view atomizes the concept of election, removing it from its rich, salvation-historical context of God choosing a covenant people (Israel, then the Church) for His purposes in the world, and turns it into an abstract, philosophical doctrine about God's secret decrees concerning individual souls.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:29-33, John 15:16, Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13

**Verses of Correction:** 1 Peter 2:9, Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 65:9, Romans 9:6-8, Romans 11:1-7, Romans 11:20-22

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "elect" must always mean "unconditionally predestined individuals" commits the **Fallacy of Inconsistent Application** (a form of special pleading). It applies a rigid, systematic definition to the word "elect" but fails to apply the same rigidity to other biblical terms. For example, the Bible says Christ died for "the world" and "all men," but the system insists these universal terms must be interpreted in a limited way. Yet, it insists the term "elect" must always be interpreted in its most absolute, individualistic sense. This is an inconsistent hermeneutic, where the rules of interpretation are changed to fit the needs of the theological system. It's a classic case of having your cake and eating it too.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that prioritizes **individualism over the biblical emphasis on covenantal community**. This is a distinctly modern, Western philosophical bias. The Bible is a book about God's dealings with families, tribes, and nations. It is a story of covenants made with a people. The individual finds their identity and salvation *within* that covenant community. The Calvinistic view of election reverses this, making the individual's secret, eternal decree the primary reality, and the church merely a collection of these pre-selected individuals. It imposes a modern, individualistic mindset onto an ancient, covenantal text.

**Question 22. How does the context of Romans 9, which focuses on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, affect the interpretation of election?**

**Answer 22. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The context of Romans 9 is not merely a background detail; it is the **controlling factor** for the entire interpretation of election within the chapter. The chapter does not exist in a vacuum. It is the heart of a three-chapter argument (Romans 9-11) where Paul is wrestling with a single, massive problem: Has God's word failed because His chosen people, Israel, have largely rejected their Messiah, while the Gentiles are now being saved? To answer this, Paul demonstrates that God's purpose has never been based on mere physical lineage but on His sovereign choice. The examples of Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau, are not about predestining individuals to heaven or hell. They are about God sovereignly choosing the line through which His **covenantal promises and the Messiah would come**. The example of Pharaoh is about God's sovereign right to raise up and use even a rebellious ruler for His own redemptive purposes—namely, demonstrating His power and making His name known. The entire chapter is about God's sovereign freedom in history to show mercy on whom He will show mercy—in this case, the Gentiles—and to harden whom He will harden—in this case, the prideful,

unbelieving portion of Israel. To lift these verses out of their Jew-Gentile, salvation-historical context and use them as a proof text for an abstract, philosophical doctrine of individual predestination is to fundamentally misread Paul's entire point.

**Scripture References:** Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36, Genesis 21:12, Malachi 1:2-3, Exodus 9:16, Hosea 2:23, Isaiah 10:22-23

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The main **rebuttal** is to insist that while the context may be national, the principles of God's sovereign choice revealed are universal and apply to individuals. The argument is that the way God chose Jacob over Esau for national purposes reveals the *way* He chooses individuals for salvific purposes. This, however, is an unwarranted leap. It assumes that God acts in exactly the same way in every sphere. But the Bible shows God acting differently in different contexts. His choice of a king is different from His offer of salvation. Furthermore, this **rebuttal** conveniently ignores the outcome for the "non-elect" in the examples. Esau was still blessed by God with a great nation. The hardening of Israel is not presented as final, as Paul spends all of Romans 11 explaining how they can be "grafted in again." These are not pictures of unconditional, eternal damnation, but of God's shifting purposes in history.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The decontextualized reading of Romans 9 is the primary pillar upon which **Calvinistic** soteriology is built. It is the go-to chapter for defenders of Unconditional Election and is central to the teaching of **Reformed, Presbyterian, and Sovereign Grace** churches. **Augustine of Hippo** was one of the first to systematically interpret this chapter as teaching individual predestination to salvation and damnation. **John Calvin** (1536) made this interpretation the linchpin of his system, calling it the "dreadful decree." This interpretation has been the source of immense controversy throughout church history, as it appears to contradict the Bible's broader teachings on God's love, justice, and the universal call of the gospel.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-18, Romans 9:21-23

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 9:1-5 (establishes the context as Israel), Romans 9:30-32 (explains Israel's failure as seeking righteousness by works, not a decree), Romans 10:13 ("whosoever"), Romans 11:23 (Israel can be grafted back in)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The deterministic interpretation of Romans 9 relies heavily on the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It isolates verses 11-23 from the explicit context established in verses 1-5 (Paul's sorrow for Israel) and the resolution provided in chapters 10 and 11 (salvation is now available to all through faith). By treating this section as a standalone treatise on metaphysics, the argument ignores the narrative flow and the specific historical problem Paul is addressing. It's like pulling a single sentence out of a long legal document about a corporate merger and claiming it's a statement about marital love. The meaning is completely distorted when divorced from its context.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's sovereignty must be expressed through meticulous, deterministic control, rather than through covenantal faithfulness**. This is a philosophical preference for a God who operates like an engineer or a programmer over the biblical picture of a



God who operates as a King, a Father, and a covenant-keeper. The Bible's story is not about the abstract mechanics of divine decrees, but about the unfolding drama of God's faithfulness to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how those promises are ultimately fulfilled in Christ in a way that surprisingly and gloriously includes the entire world.

**Question 23. What was John the Baptist's warning to the "elect" nation of Israel in Matthew 3, and what does it imply about the security of the elect?**

**Answer 23. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** John the Baptist's fiery sermon to the religious leaders of Israel in Matthew 3 is a direct and devastating assault on the notion of unconditional security based on an elect status. When the Pharisees and Sadducees—the very heart of the "elect" nation—came to him, he did not affirm their position. He called them a "generation of vipers" and issued a stark warning: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." He was dismantling their false security, which was based on their physical lineage and covenant status. His most powerful statement, however, was his analogy of the axe: "And now also the **axe is laid unto the root of the trees**: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." This implies, with terrifying clarity, that **membership in the elect body is not enough**. Even a branch of the chosen tree of Israel could be cut off if it did not produce the fruit of genuine repentance. This directly contradicts any idea of "once elect, always elect." It establishes the principle that covenant status must be validated by a life of faith and obedience, and that a privileged position can be forfeited through unbelief and fruitlessness.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 3:7-12, Luke 3:7-9, John 15:1-6, Romans 11:20-22

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A common **rebuttal** is to argue that John was speaking to false professors or "unregenerate" members of the covenant, not the "true" elect within Israel. This, however, is an argument from silence and imposes a later theological category onto the text. John addresses them based on their identity as the leaders of Israel, the children of Abraham. He makes no distinction between a "true" and "false" elect. His warning is universal to all within that covenant community. Another **rebuttal** is that this is Old Covenant language and doesn't apply to the security of the New Covenant believer. But the principle of judgment for fruitlessness is carried directly into the New Testament by Jesus Himself in the parable of the vine and the branches (John 15) and by Paul in his warning to the grafted-in Gentiles (Romans 11). The principle that God judges based on fruit, not just status, is timeless.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The implications of John the Baptist's sermon are often minimized or explained away in theological systems that teach Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints, namely **Calvinism**. The teachings of **John Calvin** (1536) and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) insist that the truly elect can neither totally nor finally fall away from grace. John's sermon presents a direct challenge to this, which is why it must be reinterpreted to apply only to "hypocrites" within Israel rather than to the elect nation itself. This contrasts with **Arminian, Wesleyan, and Anabaptist** traditions, which see John's warning as a clear affirmation of conditional security and the necessity of a faith that produces fruit.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 3:10, John 15:2, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that John's warning only applied to "false professors" within Israel commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial premise is, "No true elect person can be cut off." When presented with the evidence of John threatening to cut off the elect (the children of Abraham), the response is, "Ah, but they weren't the *true* elect." This fallacy protects the original assertion by retroactively changing the definition of the group to exclude any counterexamples. It's an unfalsifiable, circular argument that refuses to engage with the evidence as it is presented in the text.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges a metaphysical status over a relational reality**. The Calvinistic system views "election" as an unchangeable, metaphysical property infused into an individual from eternity. John the Baptist, and the rest of the Bible, views election as a **covenantal relationship**. Relationships are dynamic and have terms. A son is still a son, but he can be disinherited if he is rebellious. A branch is part of a vine, but it can be pruned if it is fruitless. By turning a living, covenantal relationship into a static, metaphysical property, the system drains the urgency and reality from the Bible's many warnings.

**Question 24. According to Ephesians 1, what are believers predestined to? Is it salvation itself, or adoption and conformity to Christ's image?**

**Answer 24. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A precise reading of Ephesians 1 reveals that predestination is not about God pre-selecting certain individuals for salvation and others for damnation. Rather, it describes the glorious, predetermined **destination and inheritance** for all who are "in Christ." The text says God has "predestinated us unto the **adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself" (v. 5) and that this was so "that we should be **holy and without blame** before him in love" (v. 4). This is echoed in Romans 8:29, which states that God did "predestinate [us] to be **conformed to the image of his Son**." The focus of predestination is the outcome, not the initial selection. It is God's eternal plan for the "end game" of every believer. Think of it as a travel brochure for a glorious destination. The brochure describes the destination in detail, a destination planned long ago. It doesn't, however, name the specific individuals who will be forced to get on the plane. The decision to get on the plane—to place one's faith in Christ—is a separate matter. Predestination is God's blueprint for the glorification of His sons and daughters; it is not a fatalistic script that negates the genuine invitation of the gospel.

**Scripture References:** Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11-12, Romans 8:29-30

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The common **rebuttal** is to argue that this distinction is meaningless, because if God predestined the end (conformity to Christ), He must have also predestined the means (the faith of the specific individuals). This argument assumes a deterministic model of causality that the Bible does not require. God can predetermine a destination for all who choose to embark on a journey without predetermining who will make that choice. For example, a government can build a beautiful city of refuge and decree that all who enter its gates will be safe and receive citizenship. The destination and its privileges are predestined, but the choice to enter

is still a real one. The Bible presents a God who has prepared an incredible inheritance and destination for His children, and He invites all to become His children through faith.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of predestination as the pre-selection of individuals for salvation is a central doctrine of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. This view, articulated by **Augustine** and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536), sees predestination as the logical starting point of salvation. God's "dreadful decree" (as Calvin himself called it) is the ultimate cause of all that follows. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees predestination as being based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe. It also contrasts with the corporate view, common among many Anabaptists and others, which sees predestination as describing God's plan for the Church as a body, rather than for specific individuals.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11, Acts 4:28

**Verses of Correction:** (The same verses, read in context, define the purpose of predestination) Romans 8:29 ("to be conformed to the image of his Son"), Ephesians 1:5 ("unto the adoption of children"), Ephesians 1:4 ("that we should be holy")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that predestining the end necessitates predestining the specific individuals commits a **Non Sequitur** fallacy ("it does not follow"). The conclusion does not logically follow from the premise. The premise is that God has a predetermined plan for the ultimate state of believers. The conclusion is that God must have therefore predetermined which specific individuals would become believers. This is a leap in logic. A plan for the destination does not logically require a pre-written passenger list. The Bible allows for a plan that is certain in its outcome for all who participate, while leaving the participation itself as a matter of genuine human response to divine grace.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's plan in terms of a closed, linear script rather than an open, covenantal framework**. The deterministic view sees history as a single, unchangeable line of code written by God. The biblical view is more like a constitution or a covenant. God has established the unchangeable laws, promises, and outcomes of the covenant of grace. He has set the terms and guaranteed the inheritance for all who enter into that covenant by faith. The framework is fixed and predestined, but individuals are still called to freely enter into that framework. The error is to confuse the predestined framework with a predestined cast of characters.

**Question 25. How does the doctrine of God's foreknowledge (Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2) relate to the concept of election?**

**Answer 25. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The doctrine of God's foreknowledge is explicitly presented in Scripture as the **foundation upon which election rests**. The Bible does not teach that God's election is an arbitrary or unconditional choice made in a vacuum. Instead, it is a choice made "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). The Apostle Paul follows this precise order in Romans 8:29: "For **whom he did foreknow**, he also did



predestinate..." The foreknowledge comes first. God, existing outside of time and knowing the end from the beginning, knew with perfect certainty every person who would freely respond in faith to the gracious offer of the gospel. Based on this perfect foreknowledge, He elected, or chose, them in Christ before the foundation of the world. This does not mean that their foreseen faith *merited* their election. Salvation is always by grace. However, it does mean that their faith was the **God-ordained condition** upon which the election was based. This view perfectly preserves God's sovereignty (He knows all and sets the terms) and human responsibility (man must believe), and it aligns with the character of a God who is just and no respecter of persons.

**Scripture References:** Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2, Acts 2:23, Romans 11:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to redefine "foreknowledge." It is argued that the Greek word for foreknowledge (*proginosko*) does not simply mean "to know beforehand," but "to fore-love" or "to enter into a relationship with beforehand." Therefore, the verse means, "those whom God chose to love beforehand, He also predestined." This redefinition, however, is not supported by the consistent usage of the word in the Bible. In Acts 26:5, Paul says the Jews "knew" (*proginosko*) him from the beginning; this clearly doesn't mean they "fore-loved" him. It means they had prior knowledge of him. The attempt to change the meaning of "foreknow" is a theological maneuver designed to remove the basis of God's choice from His knowledge and place it back into His mysterious, unconditional will, thereby protecting the TULIP system from a clear biblical contradiction.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The redefinition of "foreknowledge" is a critical argument within **Calvinistic** theology (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). This interpretive move is necessary to defend the doctrine of Unconditional Election. If foreknowledge simply means to know in advance, then election becomes conditional on foreseen faith, and the 'U' in TULIP collapses. This interpretation was championed by figures like **John Calvin** and has become standard in Reformed apologetics. It stands in contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** position, which takes foreknowledge at its plain meaning, and was the predominant view of the **early church fathers** before Augustine, who saw God's election as being based on His prescience of human faith.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For re-defining 'know' as intimate) Amos 3:2, Matthew 7:23, John 10:14

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2, Acts 26:5, 2 Peter 3:17 (uses the same root word for "knowing before")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The redefinition of "foreknowledge" is a clear case of the **Etymological Fallacy**. This fallacy wrongly assumes that the present-day meaning of a word, or its meaning in a different context, is its correct meaning in the specific context being debated. While the Hebrew word for "know" (*yada*) can sometimes imply intimacy (as in "Adam knew Eve his wife"), it does not follow that the Greek word *proginosko* always carries this meaning, especially when its other uses in the New Testament clearly refer to simple prior knowledge. It's like arguing that because the word "cool" can mean "fashionable," every historical document that says "the weather is cool" is actually talking about stylish weather.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's knowledge must be causal**. This is a philosophical position that struggles to separate knowing from causing. In this view, if God knows something will happen, He must have somehow caused it to happen. Therefore, if God foreknows who will believe, He must have caused their belief. The Bible, however, presents an omniscient God who is not bound by the linear time that He created. He can know the free choices of the future without causing them, just as a person watching a parade from a tall building can see the end of the parade at the same time as the beginning, without causing the parade to move.

**Question 26. If election is unconditional, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance?**

**Answer 26. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible's relentless emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance stands as a formidable architectural challenge to the very foundation of unconditional election. The Word of God is not a book of abstract decrees; it is a book of covenantal invitations, and every invitation has terms. From beginning to end, the path to salvation is paved with divine conditions. "He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). These are not suggestions; they are the non-negotiable requirements for reconciliation with God. If election were truly unconditional, a sovereign decree with no regard for human response, these commands would be rendered a bizarre and hollow exercise. Why command a man to believe if his belief is not a genuine condition but merely an inevitable consequence of a secret, unconditional election? Why command all men everywhere to repent if the ability to do so is only granted to a select few? The sheer weight of these conditional statements in Scripture forces an inescapable conclusion: **human response is a real and necessary component of the salvation process**. God, in His sovereignty, has decreed that the door to His kingdom is opened by the key of faith. To argue that He also unconditionally decreed who would be given the key is to make the command to "knock" a piece of divine theater.

**Scripture References:** John 3:16, John 3:36, Mark 1:15, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Hebrews 5:9, Hebrews 11:6, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:14

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that faith and repentance are not conditions *for* election, but rather the *gifts* of God that are the certain *result* of election. The argument is that God unconditionally elects a person, and as a result of that election, He irresistibly grants them the gifts of repentance and faith. This neatly preserves the system, but it does so by redefining the plain meaning of a condition. It also fails to account for the many who hear the gospel and are commanded to believe but do not. If faith is a gift automatically given to the elect, why is the command to believe issued universally? Furthermore, this view struggles with verses like Hebrews 5:9, which says Christ is the author of eternal salvation "unto all them that **obey** him." Obedience is presented as a condition for receiving the salvation He authors. The system must twist the clear conditional language of the Bible into a deterministic script to maintain its coherence.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Unconditional Election is the 'U' in the TULIP acronym, and it is a defining tenet of **Calvinism**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and Sovereign Grace** churches. This doctrine, which posits that God's choice of the elect is based

solely on His own will and not on any foreseen faith or repentance, was systematically formulated by **John Calvin** (1536), following the theological trajectory of **Augustine**. This view necessitates the reinterpretation of all conditional language in the Bible. Instead of being genuine requirements, faith and repentance become the pre-programmed responses of the elect, a view that stands in contrast to the majority of Christian traditions which see them as genuine, Spirit-enabled conditions for salvation.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 1:13, 2 Timothy 1:9, Philippians 1:29

**Verses of Correction:** John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Deuteronomy 30:19, Joshua 24:15, Revelation 22:17

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that faith is the result, not the condition, of election commits the **Special Pleading** fallacy. It creates a special, unstated rule to protect its belief. The argument says, "In all normal circumstances, when an offer has a condition, the condition must be met to receive the offer. But in the special case of salvation, the offer is unconditionally given, and the 'condition' is just an automatic result of receiving the offer." This creates a unique, self-serving exception to how conditional language works everywhere else. It's like a contest that says, "You will win if you have the winning ticket," but then arguing that having the winning ticket is not the condition of winning, but the automatic result of being pre-selected as a winner.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between God and man in terms of unilateral power rather than covenantal agreement**. A covenant, by its very nature, involves terms and conditions. It is a relational pact. The deterministic view replaces this rich, relational, covenantal framework with a sterile, metaphysical model of raw, deterministic power. In this model, there are no real conditions, only causes and effects. God's decree is the cause, and the human response is merely the effect. This philosophical preference for a power-based model over a covenant-based one drains the Bible of its relational drama and turns its conditional promises into mere descriptions of an unchangeable script.

**Question 27. What is the "Book of Life," and what does the possibility of names being "blotted out" (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5) suggest about unconditional election?**

**Answer 27. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Book of Life is a celestial record, a divine registry of those who are heirs of eternal life. The most striking and theologically significant feature of this book is not who is written in it, but the explicit biblical statement that names can be **blotted out** of it. This single, undeniable fact serves as a powerful refutation of the entire system of unconditional election and eternal security. In Exodus 32:33, God Himself tells Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." In Revelation 3:5, the risen Christ makes a promise to the overcomer: "I will **not blot out his name** out of the book of life," a promise that is meaningless if the possibility of being blotted out does not exist. If a name can be removed, then its inclusion was, by definition, conditional. This suggests a beautiful and harmonious model: God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote every name in His book from the foundation of the world, based on the sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb. However, a



person's place in that book is maintained by a living, persevering faith. Through unrepentant sin and final apostasy, that place can be forfeited. This biblical doctrine perfectly harmonizes God's sovereign, gracious initiative with man's solemn responsibility to endure to the end.

**Scripture References:** Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** Proponents of unconditional election have two primary **rebuttals**. First, they argue that the "Book of Life" in the Old Testament is a record of physical life or earthly citizenship, not eternal salvation, and that the "Lamb's Book of Life" in the New Testament is a separate, unchangeable book. The Bible, however, makes no such distinction and uses the terms interchangeably. Daniel 12:1 links being "found written in the book" with deliverance and resurrection to "everlasting life." Second, they argue that the warnings about being blotted out are merely hypothetical, intended to motivate believers, but could never actually happen to a "true" elect person. This turns God's solemn warnings into a form of divine bluffing. It asks us to believe that when God warns of a consequence, He doesn't actually mean it. This undermines the integrity and plain sense of Scripture.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints (the 'P' in TULIP), which insists that the elect can never be "lost" or have their salvation forfeited, is a central tenet of **Calvinism**. This doctrine, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, is directly challenged by the teaching on the Book of Life. The system formalized by **John Calvin** (1536) and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) requires that the list of the saved be eternally fixed and unchangeable. Therefore, the clear biblical statements about names being blotted out must be reinterpreted as hypothetical or as referring to a different, temporary book. This complex explanation is necessary to protect the system from a clear and powerful biblical counter-argument.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24

**Verses of Correction:** Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28, Hebrews 6:4-6

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the warnings about being blotted out are merely hypothetical commits the **Argument from Incredulity**. This fallacy asserts that a proposition must be false because it is difficult to imagine it being true. The reasoning is, "I cannot imagine how a true believer could ever be blotted out of the Book of Life, therefore the warnings must not be real." It dismisses the plain evidence of the text based on a personal or systematic inability to reconcile it with a preconceived belief. It prioritizes the comfort of the system over the clear, and sometimes uncomfortable, warnings of Scripture. It's like a person standing on a railroad track, arguing, "I can't imagine a train would ever come down this abandoned track, therefore the warning sign must be hypothetical."

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a static, metaphysical substance rather than a**

**living, covenantal relationship.** In the philosophical view, salvation is an "it"—an unchangeable property that is infused into a person at the moment of regeneration. In the biblical view, salvation is a relationship with a "Him"—a living, dynamic covenant with Jesus Christ. Relationships have terms and can be broken. Covenants have conditions and can be violated. By reifying salvation into an object, the system removes the relational and conditional elements that are so central to the biblical narrative, making the idea of being "blotted out" seem philosophically impossible.

**Question 28. How does the grafting of the Gentiles into the olive tree in Romans 11 illustrate the nature of election and the possibility of being "cut off"?**

**Answer 28. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Paul's analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11 is one of the most devastating critiques of unconditional election and eternal security in all of Scripture. The olive tree represents the covenant people of God, with its root being the patriarchs and the promises made to them. The "natural branches" are the nation of Israel, the original "elect." Paul states with stark clarity that some of these natural branches were **broken off**. Why? Not because of an eternal decree of reprobation, but "because of **unbelief**" (v. 20). Then, he describes the Gentile believers as branches from a "wild olive tree" that have been "grafted in among them." How? Not by an unconditional decree, but "by **faith**" (v. 20). The illustration is a perfect picture of conditional, corporate election. But Paul does not stop there. He issues a direct and chilling warning to the newly grafted-in Gentile believers: "Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee... otherwise, **thou also shalt be cut off**" (v. 20-22). This passage teaches, beyond any doubt, that one's position in the covenant tree of salvation is conditional upon continuing faith and that it is possible for a grafted-in branch to be cut off.

**Scripture References:** Romans 11:11-24, John 15:1-6, Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-22

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the "branches" being cut off are not "true believers" but only those with a false or temporary faith. This is the classic "No True Scotsman" argument. The text, however, makes no such distinction. The natural branches were part of the covenant people. The wild branches are grafted "in among them" and "partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." This is the language of genuine participation, not of mere outward profession. To say they were never "truly" in is to impose a systematic category that the text itself does not provide. Another **rebuttal** is that Paul is speaking of nations or covenant communities, not individuals. But nations and communities are made up of individuals. The warning is addressed to "thou" (singular) in verse 22. The warning is personal and direct.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The clear teaching of Romans 11 on the possibility of being "cut off" stands in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) insists that a true elect believer can never finally fall from grace. Therefore, this passage must be reinterpreted to refer only to the loss of outward privilege or to false professors who were never truly saved. This complex explanation is required to protect the system from Paul's plain warning. In contrast, **Arminian, Wesleyan, and Anabaptist** traditions have long pointed to this passage as a key text supporting the doctrine of conditional security.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:35-39, 1 John 2:19, Jude 1:24

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 11:20-22, John 15:2, John 15:6, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the branches cut off were never "true believers" commits the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. This is a form of special pleading where a new, unsupported element is added to an argument to save it from being falsified. The original belief is, "True believers cannot be cut off." The evidence from Romans 11 shows branches being cut off. To save the belief, the ad hoc element is added: "Ah, but those were not *true* believers." This new condition is added "to the occasion" (ad hoc) without any textual evidence, for the sole purpose of rescuing the original, threatened belief. It's an intellectually dishonest way to handle counterevidence.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the church as an invisible, abstract collection of individuals rather than a visible, covenantal community**. The philosophical preference is for an invisible, true church of the elect, which is distinct from the visible, mixed church on earth. This allows for the dismissal of any warnings or examples of apostasy as only applying to the "visible" church, while the "invisible" church remains perfectly secure. The Bible, however, does not make this sharp distinction. The warnings are addressed to the real, visible communities of believers, with all their mixtures of strength and weakness. The olive tree is a visible, tangible entity, not an abstract, invisible idea.

**Question 29. What does it mean that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)?**

**Answer 29. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The statement "many are called, but few are chosen," which concludes the parable of the wedding feast, is a summary of the parable's lesson about the nature of the gospel invitation and the requirements for final acceptance. It does not teach that God only calls a few or that His choice is an arbitrary, unconditional decree. The "call" in the parable is broad and universal. The king's servants go out first to the originally invited guests, and then to the "highways," gathering "as many as they found, both bad and good." This is the **universal call of the gospel**, extended to all. The "chosen," however, are the "few" who not only accept the invitation but also meet the king's requirements. In the parable, this is symbolized by the man who is cast into outer darkness because he does not have on a **wedding garment**. This garment represents the righteousness of Christ, which is received by faith. The man was "called"—he was in the banquet hall—but he was not "chosen" for the final celebration because he came on his own terms, in his own filthy rags, refusing the king's provision. Therefore, the verse teaches that the gospel call goes out to many, but only those who respond with genuine, clothing faith are chosen, or approved, for the kingdom.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:16-24, Revelation 19:7-9, Isaiah 61:10

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The Calvinistic interpretation is that the "call" refers to the general, external call of the gospel, while the "chosen" refers to the elect who have been given the special, internal, effectual call. This reading imposes the "two calls" theory onto the parable. The parable



itself, however, makes no such distinction. There is only one call, one invitation. The difference is in the response of the hearers. Some refuse the call outright, and one accepts the call but refuses the required garment. The parable is about human responsibility in responding to a universal call, not about two different types of divine calls. To argue otherwise is to force the parable onto the procrustean bed of a theological system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of this verse as evidence for a special, effectual call for the elect is a standard teaching in **Calvinistic** churches (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). This is a necessary interpretation for the system developed by **John Calvin** (1536), which requires a distinction between the general call that all hear and the effectual call that only the elect receive and which irresistibly brings them to salvation. This view contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** interpretation, which sees the verse as a straightforward description of a universal call and a conditional acceptance based on a faith that embraces Christ's righteousness.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:30 ("whom he called, them he also justified"), 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 22:1-14, Isaiah 55:1, Revelation 22:17, Acts 13:46

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for the "two calls" theory based on this verse commits the **Bifurcation** fallacy (a type of false dilemma). It assumes that the call must be one of only two types: either a general, ineffectual call or a special, irresistible call. It fails to consider the biblical alternative: that there is one, universal, sufficient, and enabling call that is made effectual in the life of the one who responds in faith. The effectiveness is not in the type of call, but in the reception of the call. It's like a radio broadcast: there is only one broadcast signal (the call), but it is only "effectual" in the radios that are turned on and tuned in (the response of faith).

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's communication in terms of irresistible force rather than relational persuasion**. The deterministic model requires a "call" that is more like an electrical impulse that forces a machine to turn on. The biblical model, however, presents God's call as a rich, personal, and persuasive invitation. It is the voice of a Father calling to His children, the voice of a King inviting to a feast, the voice of a Savior offering rest. It is a call that appeals to the heart, mind, and will, a call that can be heeded or, tragically, ignored.

**Question 30. How can we reconcile the verses on God's sovereign choice with the verses that emphasize human responsibility to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15)?**

**Answer 30. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The reconciliation of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is not found by building a philosophical system that champions one at the expense of the other, but by humbly accepting the full testimony of Scripture as a divine paradox. The Bible, as the inspired Word of God, does not see these two truths as contradictory. It affirms with equal force that God is absolutely sovereign, working all things according to His will, and that man is a responsible moral agent who is commanded to choose. The key to holding these truths in tension is to understand that **God's sovereignty is so complete that it includes His**

**decree that man should have a genuine will.** The command, "choose you this day whom ye will serve," is not a charade. It is a real command, given to real moral agents, with real, eternal consequences. God's plan is not a fragile blueprint that can be shattered by a human choice. Instead, His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge have woven every free human choice into His unshakeable, overarching redemptive purpose. We are not called to solve this tension with our finite minds, but to believe it with our faithful hearts. The error of both hyper-Calvinism and Pelagianism is the arrogant attempt to make the ways of God fit neatly into the boxes of human logic.

**Scripture References:** (Sovereignty) Ephesians 1:11, Isaiah 46:10, Daniel 4:35, Romans 9:20-21; (Responsibility) Joshua 24:15, Deuteronomy 30:19, John 5:40, Revelation 22:17; (Paradox) Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is that this "paradox" is a logical contradiction and a cop-out. They insist that one must be primary, and for them, it is God's sovereign decree. The primary **rebuttal** from the free-will side is that a truly sovereign God who decrees all things negates any meaningful choice. Both **rebuttals** fail because they are rooted in the assumption that human logic is the final arbiter of divine reality. They refuse to accept that there may be truths about God that transcend our ability to fully comprehend or systematize. The Bible does not present a system; it presents a person. And our relationship with that person involves both His sovereign grace and our responsible faith. To deny either is to create a caricature of the biblical God.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This is the central dividing line of many theological debates. **Calvinism (Reformed, Presbyterian)** resolves the tension by emphasizing divine sovereignty to the point that human freedom becomes, in practice, non-existent in the matter of salvation (a view called compatibilism, which redefines freedom). On the other side, **Pelagianism** (condemned as heresy in 418 AD by the **Council of Carthage**) and some forms of **liberal Christianity** resolve it by emphasizing human freedom to the point that God's sovereignty is limited. The middle ground, which holds both truths in tension, is occupied by various groups, including **Arminians, Wesleyans, and many Baptists and Anabaptists**, and was the general view of the **pre-Augustinian church fathers**.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For Sovereignty alone) Romans 9:18-21, Ephesians 1:11; (For Free Will alone) Joshua 24:15, John 7:17

**Verses of Correction:** Philippians 2:12-13 ("work out your own salvation... For it is God which worketh in you"), Acts 2:23 ("him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The attempt to resolve this tension by eliminating one side is a classic **False Dilemma** (or either-or fallacy). It presents two options (absolute divine determinism vs. absolute human autonomy) as the only possibilities. This flawed framing forces a choice between two unbiblical extremes. The Bible itself provides the third option: a compatibilism of mystery, where God is 100% sovereign and man is 100% responsible, and both are true without

contradiction. It's like asking if light is a wave or a particle. Physics tells us it behaves as both. To insist it must be only one is to impose a false dilemma on the reality of the physical world.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that human reason is the ultimate measure of all truth. Both the hyper-Calvinist and the Pelagian are rationalists at heart. They cannot tolerate a paradox or a mystery that their logical systems cannot fully contain and explain. They approach the Bible as a philosophical textbook that must be logically consistent according to the rules of human reason. The biblical worldview, however, is one of revelation. It calls us to believe what God has revealed, even when those truths stretch the limits of our comprehension. It prioritizes faith in divine revelation over the supremacy of human reason.

## The Will of Man and the Grace of God

**Question 31. Does the Bible teach that the human will is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace?**

**Answer 31. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible teaches that the unregenerate human will is in a state of bondage to sin, but it does not teach that it is completely bound and unable to respond to the initiative of God's grace. Scripture paints a picture of a will that is fallen, morally corrupt, and naturally inclined away from God. Left to itself, it "will not" come to Christ. However, the Bible also shows that God's grace, through the hearing of the Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, is a powerful, persuasive force that **enables a response**. Jesus's own words in John 5:40 are telling: "And ye **will not** come to me, that ye might have life." He does not say, "ye *cannot* come." The issue He identifies is one of volition, not of capacity. The universal commands to "choose," "repent," and "believe" would be a divine mockery if the will were utterly incapable of responding. The doctrine of "Total Inability" is a philosophical inference that takes the biblical teaching of man's radical depravity a step too far, turning a moral unwillingness into a metaphysical incapacity. The Bible's position is that the will is a captive that must be liberated, not a corpse that must be reanimated before it can hear a command. God's grace provides that liberation, enabling the will to make a genuine choice.

**Scripture References:** John 5:40, John 7:17, Revelation 22:17, Joshua 24:15, Deuteronomy 30:19, Romans 2:14-15, Acts 7:51

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** will be verses that speak of spiritual death, such as Ephesians 2:1 ("dead in trespasses and sins"), and the inability of the natural man to understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). The argument is that a dead man cannot respond. This, as previously discussed, is a faulty argument based on taking a metaphor too literally. The "dead" in Ephesians 2 are still "walking" and "fulfilling desires." The metaphor describes their legal and relational separation from God, not a state of paralysis. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 2:14 describes the state of the natural man *apart from the Spirit's work*. It does not deny that the Spirit can and does illuminate the unregenerate mind to understand the gospel. These verses describe the problem; God's drawing grace is the solution that enables the will to respond.



**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of the "bondage of the will" in the sense of total inability is a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. It was famously articulated by **Martin Luther** in his book *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525), written in response to Erasmus. While Luther is not a Calvinist, his strong Augustinian view on this point heavily influenced the Reformed tradition. **John Calvin** adopted and systematized this view, making it the foundation (the 'T' in TULIP) for the rest of his soteriology. This view is a defining difference between the Reformed tradition and the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which holds that God's "prevenient grace" restores to all people the freedom to respond to the gospel.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:44, Romans 3:11, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 8:7-8

**Verses of Correction:** John 5:40, Revelation 22:17, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, John 12:32

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for total inability often commits the **Hasty Generalization** fallacy. It takes a few specific verses that describe the depth of human sinfulness and generalizes them into an absolute, metaphysical principle of total inability that is then applied to all of humanity in every circumstance. It ignores the vast body of evidence (the universal commands and invitations) that suggests a capacity for response. It's like seeing a few people who are seriously ill and concluding that the entire human race is incapable of walking. The diagnosis is too sweeping and ignores the evidence of those who, by the physician's help, are able to get up and walk.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human nature through a monistic, deterministic lens**. This philosophical view sees the human being as a unified entity whose actions are determined by their fundamental nature. If the nature is "sinful," then all actions, including the will, must be "sinful" and incapable of choosing God. The Bible, however, presents a more complex picture of human nature, with a conscience that can respond to God's law and a spirit that can be convicted by the Holy Spirit. It is not a monolithic block of "sinfulness," but a complex battleground where the grace of God can and does engage the human will.

**Question 32. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ (John 6:44), and is this drawing irresistible?**

**Answer 32. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ is absolutely essential, initiatory, and powerful. Jesus Himself declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**" (John 6:44). This divine "drawing" is the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He opens hearts, illuminates minds to the truth of the gospel, and overcomes the spiritual blindness and bondage caused by sin. Without this divine initiative, no one would be saved. However, the Bible does not teach that this drawing is an irresistible, coercive force that cannot be refused. The very same Gospel of John that speaks of the Father's drawing also contains Jesus' lament, "ye will not come to me" (John 5:40). Stephen's final sermon culminates in the accusation, "Ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**" (Acts 7:51). These are not descriptions of impossible acts. The drawing of the Spirit is a **powerful, persuasive, and enabling call**, not a

metaphysical compulsion. It is the divine persuasion that makes a willing response possible, not a divine force that makes an unwilling response inevitable.

**Scripture References:** John 6:44, John 12:32, John 16:7-11, Acts 7:51, Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Hebrews 10:29

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The main **rebuttal** focuses on the Greek word for "draw," *helkuo*, arguing that it implies a forcible dragging, as when a net is dragged to shore. While the word can have this meaning, it is not its only meaning. In John 12:32, Jesus says that when He is lifted up, He will "draw all men" to Himself. Since not all men are saved, this drawing cannot be irresistible. It speaks of the magnetic, moral attraction of the cross. The context must determine the meaning. To insist on the most forceful meaning in John 6:44 while ignoring the clear universal context of John 12:32 is inconsistent. The drawing is powerful enough to save anyone who yields to it, but not so powerful that it overrides the will of those who choose to resist it.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the 'I' in the TULIP acronym of **Calvinism** and is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This doctrine is a logical necessity of the system: if man is totally unable and God has unconditionally elected some, then the grace applied to the elect must be irresistible to guarantee their salvation. This view, developed by **Augustine** and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536), stands in contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view of "prevenient grace," which is seen as a universal, enabling grace that can be accepted or rejected.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:37, John 6:44, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:13

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Proverbs 1:24-25, John 5:40

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for irresistible drawing often commits the **Cherry-Picking** fallacy. It focuses on John 6:44 and insists on the most forceful definition of the word "draw," while ignoring or downplaying other clear passages that explicitly speak of the Holy Spirit being resisted (Acts 7:51), God's grace being received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), and people being unwilling to come to Christ (Matthew 23:37). A balanced doctrine cannot be built by focusing on one verse to the exclusion of others. All the evidence must be considered and harmonized.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views divine influence in terms of physical force rather than moral persuasion**. This is a mechanistic worldview. It thinks of the soul as a physical object that must be moved by an external force. If the force is strong enough (irresistible), the object moves. The Bible, however, presents God's interaction with humanity in personal, relational, and moral terms. The Holy Spirit does not "drag" the soul like a magnet dragging a piece of iron. He "convinces," "testifies," "guides," and "teaches." He is a person who engages in moral persuasion, not an impersonal force that engages in metaphysical compulsion.

**Question 33. How do the repeated invitations to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" in Scripture imply a capacity for human response?**

**Answer 33. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The repeated, earnest, and universal invitations of Scripture to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" are one of the most powerful, commonsense proofs that the human will is capable of responding to God's grace. These are not empty, rhetorical gestures. They are bona fide commands and offers from the God of the universe. The final, glorious invitation of the Bible sums up the spirit of them all: "And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that heareth say, **Come**. And let him that is athirst **come**. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). The very structure of these commands implies a capacity in the hearer to respond. You do not command a corpse to come. You do not tell a stone to ask. The commands are addressed to living, moral agents who, by the enabling grace of God that accompanies the call, have the ability to make a choice. To argue that a person is utterly incapable of responding to these commands until after they have been secretly and irresistibly regenerated is to make God's Word a book of absurdities, where He commands the impossible and invites the incapable. The invitations are real because the capacity to respond, through grace, is real.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 55:1-3, John 7:37, Revelation 3:20, Revelation 22:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is that these commands are only issued to demonstrate man's inability and thus show him his need for irresistible grace. In this view, the command "come" is not meant to be obeyed by the unregenerate, but to prove to them that they *cannot* come on their own. This turns the gracious invitations of the gospel into a cruel legal device designed to increase condemnation. It portrays a God who says, "Come to me for rest," with the secret intention of proving to the weary soul that it is incapable of taking a single step. This is a monstrous caricature of the God who says, "Come now, and let us reason together." The invitations are not a setup for failure; they are a sincere offer of life.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The view that these universal invitations are not genuine offers to all but serve only to highlight the inability of the non-elect is a necessary conclusion of the doctrine of Total Inability, as taught in **hyper-Calvinistic** circles (**Reformed, Presbyterian**). This view, which flows from the systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, must find a purpose for the universal calls that does not violate the particularity of election and grace. The "demonstration of inability" argument is the systematic solution. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees these invitations as the very vehicle of "prevenient grace," the divine influence that enables a response from all who hear.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 3:20 ("by the law is the knowledge of sin"), John 6:44

**Verses of Correction:** Revelation 22:17, Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 55:1, John 5:40, Matthew 7:7-8

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the invitations are only meant to prove inability is a form of the **Straw Man** fallacy. It misrepresents the purpose of a gospel invitation. A genuine invitation is meant to be accepted. The argument reconstructs it as something else entirely—a diagnostic tool. It attacks this reconstructed, ungracious purpose ("Why would God make a cruel, unattainable offer?") rather than dealing with the plain, gracious purpose stated in the text. It's like



arguing that a "Help Wanted" sign is not really an offer of employment, but just a cruel trick to remind the unemployed that they don't have the skills for the job.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's primary interaction with the unregenerate is legal rather than gracious**. This view sees every divine utterance to the unsaved through the lens of the law, which can only condemn. It fails to recognize that the gospel invitation is a different kind of speech act altogether. It is not law; it is grace. It is not a demand; it is an offer. It is not a command that highlights sin; it is a promise that offers forgiveness. To treat the sweet invitations of the gospel as if they were the harsh demands of Sinai is a profound category error, confusing the ministry of condemnation with the ministry of reconciliation.

**Question 34. What does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem—"how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37)—reveal about the resistibility of God's will?**

**Answer 34. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Jesus' sorrowful lament over Jerusalem is one of the most poignant and powerful passages in all of Scripture, and it serves as a definitive statement on the resistibility of God's saving will. In this cry from the heart of God incarnate, two wills are placed in stark contrast. First, there is the divine will of Jesus: "how often **would I** have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." This is the expressed, sincere desire of God for the salvation and protection of His covenant people. It is a will of love, compassion, and grace. Second, there is the human will of the people: "**and ye would not!**" The reason for their desolation is not a secret, eternal decree of reprobation from the Father. The reason is stated plainly: their own rebellious, unwilling hearts. This passage reveals a God whose gracious intentions can be thwarted by human obstinacy. It demonstrates that His desire to save does not operate as an irresistible force. He stands with His arms open, but He will not force His children to come under His wings. This single verse is an insurmountable obstacle for any system that teaches that God's saving grace is always effectual and cannot be resisted.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34, Acts 7:51, Proverbs 1:24-31, Isaiah 65:2, John 5:40

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to appeal to the "two wills" of God. The argument is that Jesus is expressing a frustration of His "preceptive will" (what He commands and desires in one sense), but not His "decretive will" (what He has secretly and unchangeably decreed). In this view, God secretly decreed that Jerusalem would *not* be gathered, even while He openly expressed His desire that they *would* be gathered. This solution, while preserving the system, does so at a great cost: it portrays God as being divided against Himself, with a secret will that is the opposite of His revealed will. It makes His tears over Jerusalem seem disingenuous. The simpler, more biblically consistent reading is to take Jesus at His word: He genuinely wanted to save them, but they genuinely refused.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The "two wills" theory is a theological device used within **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** to reconcile passages like this with the doctrine of irresistible grace. This distinction between the decretive and preceptive will was

developed by theologians following **John Calvin** to handle the clear biblical evidence of God's universal, benevolent desires. While the distinction can be useful in some contexts, its application here creates a significant moral and theological problem by suggesting a form of divine insincerity. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees this passage as a clear proof of resistible grace and the genuine freedom of the human will to reject God's love.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:19 ("Who hath resisted his will?"), Ephesians 1:11

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 23:37, Acts 7:51, John 5:40, 2 Peter 3:9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "two wills" argument, when used to explain away God's sincerity, can be seen as a form of **Equivocation**. It uses the word "will" with two very different and seemingly contradictory meanings in the same context. It says God "wills" (desires) the salvation of all, but also "wills" (decrees) the damnation of some. By shifting the meaning of this key term, the argument can appear to resolve the contradiction, but it does so by making the term itself ambiguous. It's like saying, "I am going to the bank (to get money)," and then later saying, "I am going to the bank (of the river)." The word is the same, but the meaning is entirely different, and to confuse the two would be misleading.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's sovereignty must be expressed in a way that is free from any apparent frustration or limitation**. This is a philosophical ideal of impassibility, borrowed more from Greek philosophy (like Aristotle's "unmoved mover") than from the Hebrew Bible. The God of the Bible is deeply relational and is often portrayed as being grieved, vexed, and frustrated by the rebellion of His people. He is not a stoic, impassive deity. The lament over Jerusalem reveals the heart of a loving Father whose heart can be broken by the choices of His children. To explain this away with a philosophical device is to sacrifice the relational God of the Bible for a more logically tidy, but less biblical, philosophical construct.

**Question 35. Is the faith that leads to salvation a gift from God that is irresistibly applied, or is it a human response to God's gracious initiative?**

**Answer 35. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible presents faith not as a choice between a divine gift and a human response, but as a **human response that is made possible by a divine gift**. It is a beautiful synergy, not a stark "either-or." Ephesians 2:8-9 is key: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The "gift of God" in this passage refers to the entire package of salvation, which is initiated and accomplished by His grace. Faith is the channel, the open hand, through which this gift is received. The ability to have faith is itself a work of grace. As Romans 10:17 says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God provides the message, the Holy Spirit provides the conviction and illumination, and this gracious initiative enables the human will to respond in faith. However, the Bible consistently portrays the *act* of believing as a personal response and a command to be obeyed. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The idea that faith is a gift that is irresistibly applied to a passive soul is not supported by the text. Grace enables, the Spirit draws, but the individual must believe.

**Scripture References:** Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:17, Acts 16:31, John 3:16, Romans 4:3-5, Hebrews 11:6, Galatians 5:6

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to isolate Ephesians 2:8 and argue that the pronoun "that" ("and *that* not of yourselves") refers directly and exclusively to "faith," thus proving faith itself is the gift. While grammatically possible, it is more likely in the context that "that" refers to the whole concept of salvation by grace through faith. Even if "faith" is the antecedent, it doesn't necessitate that the gift is irresistibly applied. God can give the gift of an opportunity to believe, or the ability to believe, without forcing the act of belief. Another **rebuttal** comes from John 6:65, "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." This proves that the ability to come is a gift, which is not in dispute. It does not, however, prove that this gift is given only to a select few or that it operates irresistibly.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine that saving faith is a gift that is monergistically and irresistibly granted only to the elect is a central tenet of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. This view is a logical necessity of the doctrines of Total Inability and Unconditional Election. It was systematically defended by **John Calvin**, who argued that faith is not a condition for salvation but a part of the salvation package that is sovereignly bestowed upon the elect. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view that faith is a Spirit-enabled human response that is the condition for receiving the gift of salvation.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:29, John 6:65, Acts 13:48

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, John 3:16, John 20:31, Hebrews 4:2

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "faith is a gift, therefore it must be irresistible" is a **Non Sequitur**. The conclusion does not logically follow from the premise. A gift can be offered without being irresistibly received. If I offer you the gift of a million dollars, it is still a gift, even if you refuse to accept it. The "gift" of faith can be understood as the gracious provision of sufficient evidence, the convicting work of the Spirit, and the enabling of the will, all of which make belief possible. It does not logically require that the final act of entrusting oneself to Christ is also performed by God on behalf of the person.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **fails to distinguish between the ability and the act**. This is a subtle but critical philosophical distinction. The Calvinistic view tends to conflate the two. It argues that because God gives the *ability* to believe (the gift), He must also perform the *act* of believing for us. The Bible, however, maintains a clear distinction. God's grace provides the ability, but He commands us to perform the act. It's like a physical therapist who works with a paralyzed patient, strengthening their muscles and enabling them to stand (the gift of ability). The therapist does not then perform the act of walking for the patient; he commands the patient to "take up your bed and walk" (the required act).

**Question 36. If grace is irresistible, why does the Bible contain warnings against resisting the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51) and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1)?**



**Answer 36. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible's explicit and solemn warnings against resisting the Holy Spirit and receiving God's grace in vain serve as a direct refutation of the doctrine of irresistible grace. These passages are not directed at hypothetical situations or at people who were never genuinely offered grace. They are real warnings about real possibilities. When Stephen confronted the Sanhedrin, he was not accusing them of attempting the impossible; he was condemning them for a real and persistent sin: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Similarly, Paul's heartfelt plea to the Corinthian believers, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain**" (2 Corinthians 6:1), would be utterly meaningless if saving grace were an irresistible force that could not be received "in vain." The very existence of these warnings in the divine architecture of Scripture proves that the grace of God is a powerful, persuasive offer that can be, and tragically often is, refused and squandered by the pride and rebellion of the human heart.

**Scripture References:** Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, Proverbs 1:24-26, Isaiah 65:2, Matthew 23:37

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is to posit two kinds of grace: "common grace," which is resistible and extended to all, and "saving grace" (or "effectual grace"), which is irresistible and extended only to the elect. In this framework, Stephen was only accusing the Pharisees of resisting common grace, not the irresistible saving grace they were never offered. This "two graces" theory, however, is a theological construct created to solve a problem within the system; it is not explicitly taught in Scripture. The Bible speaks of "the grace of God," and the context of these warnings is always salvific. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth about their salvation when he warns them not to receive grace in vain. To invent a different kind of grace to explain away a clear biblical statement is an act of systematic theology overriding exegesis.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the 'I' in the TULIP of **Calvinism** and is a central teaching in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This doctrine, which flows from the deterministic logic of **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, requires that any biblical passage speaking of resistance to God's grace must be reinterpreted. The "two graces" theory is the most common method for achieving this. This stands in stark contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees these passages as clear evidence that saving grace is, in fact, resistible.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:37, John 6:44, Romans 8:30

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 12:15, John 5:40

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "two graces" argument is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("saving grace is irresistible") is threatened by clear counterevidence (Acts 7:51). To save the belief, a new, unsupported element is introduced: the existence of a different, resistible "common grace." This new element is created "for this" (ad hoc) specific purpose—to rescue the original theory from being falsified. It's an intellectually questionable move that protects a belief by inventing new categories that are not found in the original evidence. It's

like a scientist whose theory is disproven by an experiment, so he invents a new, undiscovered law of physics just to make his theory work.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's purposes must be understood in terms of efficiency rather than relationship**. The deterministic model requires a perfectly efficient system. If God intends to save someone, the means He uses must be 100% efficient and irresistible. Any "wasted" or "resisted" grace introduces inefficiency into the system. The Bible, however, portrays a God who operates in a relational, and sometimes seemingly "inefficient," way. He pleads, He warns, He sends prophets who are rejected, He offers a grace that is spurned. This is the messy reality of a real relationship with free moral agents, not the clean, efficient operation of a divine machine.

**Question 37. What is the "effectual call," and is there a biblical basis for a special, internal call that is different from the general, external call of the Gospel?**

**Answer 37. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The concept of an "effectual call" as a special, internal, irresistible summons given only to the elect—distinct from the general, external call of the gospel given to all—is a **theological construct, not an explicit biblical doctrine**. It is a piece of systematic scaffolding erected to support the structure of Calvinism. The Bible speaks of one gospel call. This call is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. This one call is inherently powerful and "effectual" in that it is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The call's effect, however, is contingent on the response of the hearer. It becomes "effectual" *in the life* of the person who responds to it in faith. The idea of two different types of calls—one designed to be rejected by the non-elect and another designed to be irresistible to the elect—is not found in the text. It is an invention required by a system that cannot reconcile a universal call with a particular election. The Bible's model is simpler: one call goes out to all, and it is effectual for those who believe.

**Scripture References:** Romans 1:16, Romans 8:30, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, Matthew 22:14, Hebrews 4:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary text used to support the effectual call is Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he called, them he also justified." It is argued that since all who are "called" in this verse are also "justified," this must be a special, effectual call that always results in salvation. This interpretation, however, ignores the nature of the "golden chain." Paul is speaking from God's eternal perspective, describing the logical and certain outcome *for those who are ultimately saved*. He is not describing the mechanics or the nature of the call itself as it is experienced in time. He is simply stating that for the elect, the call leads to justification. Another text is 1 Corinthians 1:24, which says Christ is the power and wisdom of God "unto them which are called." Again, this describes the *result* of the call in the life of believers, not a different *type* of call.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of the Effectual Call is a central and necessary component of **Calvinistic** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It was systematically developed by theologians following **John Calvin** to bridge the gap between the Bible's universal invitations and the system's doctrine of a limited, particular election. Without the

idea of a special, irresistible call for the elect, the system would collapse, as there would be no mechanism to guarantee that the elect would, in fact, come to faith. This theological device is a hallmark of the Reformed tradition.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:30, 1 Corinthians 1:24, John 6:45, Acts 13:48

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 22:14 ("many are called, but few are chosen"), Hebrews 4:2 ("the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith"), Proverbs 1:24 ("I have called, and ye refused")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for the effectual call commits the **Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent**. The logical form is: If a person receives the effectual call (P), then they will be justified (Q). This person is justified (Q). Therefore, they must have received the effectual call (P). The error is that it assumes the conclusion in the premise. It defines the "called" in Romans 8:30 as "the effectually called" and then uses the fact that they are justified to prove that the call was effectual. It's a circular argument that doesn't prove that a special type of call exists, only that for those who are saved, the call was, in fact, effective.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **causality must be uniform and mechanistic**. This philosophical bias requires that for a given cause (the call), the effect (salvation) must always be the same. Since the effect is not the same for everyone who hears the gospel, it concludes that there must be two different causes (two different types of calls). The Bible, however, operates on a relational and personal model of causality. In this model, a single cause (the one gospel call) can produce different effects based on the disposition of the recipient. The sower sows one type of seed, but it produces different results in four different types of soil.

**Question 38. How does the concept of "hardening" the heart, as seen with Pharaoh and Israel, work in the Bible? Is it an active work of God or a consequence of human rebellion?**

**Answer 38. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical concept of God "hardening" a heart is a solemn act of divine judgment, but it is not an act of God creating evil or unbelief in a neutral or innocent person. Rather, it is the **judicial consequence of persistent human rebellion**. The classic case study is Pharaoh. The book of Exodus uses two different phrases: "Pharaoh hardened his heart," and "the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart." This is not a contradiction. The process begins with Pharaoh's own prideful, defiant choice to harden his own heart against God's command. After this pattern of rebellion is established, God then acts judicially to confirm and solidify the hardness that Pharaoh himself has chosen. God's hardening is the act of giving a rebel over to his rebellion. It is the withdrawal of restraining grace, allowing the sin that is already present in the heart to become fully mature and set. The same principle is seen with Israel in the time of Isaiah and with the Gentile world in Romans 1. God gives people over to a "reprobate mind" *because* they first refuse to honor Him. The hardening is a reactive judgment, not a proactive creation of sin.



**Scripture References:** Exodus 4:21, Exodus 7:3, Exodus 7:13-14, Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 9:34, Deuteronomy 2:30, Joshua 11:20, 1 Samuel 6:6, Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40, Romans 1:24-28, Romans 9:18, Romans 11:7-8, 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to focus exclusively on the verses where it says "the LORD hardened" Pharaoh's heart, and to use Romans 9:18 ("whom he will he hardeneth") to argue that this is a purely sovereign, unconditional act of God, unrelated to the person's prior choices. This interpretation, however, can only be sustained by ignoring the parallel verses where Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. A topical study requires that all the verses be harmonized. When harmonized, a clear pattern emerges: human rebellion precedes divine hardening. The argument from Romans 9 again lifts the verse out of its context, which is about God's right to use a self-hardened ruler like Pharaoh for His own redemptive purposes in history.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of hardening as a direct, unconditional, and sometimes proactive work of God is a necessary component of **hyper-Calvinism**. This view, flowing from the deterministic systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, sees the hardening of the reprobate as the flip side of the irresistible grace shown to the elect. Both are seen as expressions of God's meticulous, sovereign decree. This view is taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees hardening as a judicial act in response to foreseen or actual unbelief.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:17-18, Exodus 7:3, John 12:40, Isaiah 63:17

**Verses of Correction:** Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, 1 Samuel 6:6, Hebrews 3:8, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 4:7, Psalm 95:8

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for unconditional hardening often commits the **Suppressed Evidence** fallacy (a form of cherry-picking). It systematically emphasizes the verses that say "God hardened" while ignoring or minimizing the significance of the verses that say "Pharaoh hardened" his own heart. By presenting only half of the evidence, it creates a distorted picture that seems to support its conclusion. A full and honest examination of all the relevant texts, however, reveals a more complex and nuanced process that begins with human responsibility. It's like a lawyer telling the jury about the defendant's fingerprints on the weapon, but "forgetting" to mention the testimony of ten eyewitnesses who saw someone else commit the crime.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's sovereignty in terms of direct, unilateral causation**. This is a simplistic, almost mechanical view of how God works in the world. It assumes that for any event to be under God's control, He must be its direct and primary cause. The Bible, however, presents a God who works through a complex interplay of primary and secondary causes. He can work through the free choices, and even the sinful choices, of His creatures to accomplish His will. The hardening of Pharaoh is a perfect example of this complex agency, where both God and Pharaoh are said to be the actors. The philosophical error is to reduce this complex, personal interaction to a simple, unilateral, deterministic act.

**Question 39. If a person cannot respond to God without irresistible grace, how can they be held accountable for their unbelief?**

**Answer 39. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The doctrine of human accountability, which is a cornerstone of biblical justice, is rendered incoherent by the premise of irresistible grace and total inability. The Bible consistently holds human beings responsible for their unbelief. Jesus did not rebuke the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida for their metaphysical inability to repent; He rebuked them because "they repented not" in the face of mighty works (Matthew 11:20-21). The condemnation, according to John 3:19, is not that men were created unable to see the light, but that "light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil." The reason for judgment is a moral one—a rebellious love for sin—not a constitutional one. Accountability requires the ability to respond. To condemn a person for failing to do something they were created incapable of doing, while withholding the grace that would enable them, is contrary to the very character of the God who is a "God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Bible's teaching on accountability presupposes that God's universal, prevenient grace gives all people sufficient light and ability to be held justly responsible for their choice.

**Scripture References:** John 3:18-19, John 5:40, Matthew 11:20-24, Romans 1:18-21, Romans 2:1-8, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Hebrews 4:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that man's inability is itself a culpable, sinful state for which he is responsible, having inherited it from Adam. Therefore, God is just in condemning him for the fruits of that inability, including his unbelief. This argument, however, simply pushes the problem of justice back a step. It still results in a person being condemned for a condition they did not choose and cannot remedy on their own. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to mystery, stating that we cannot understand how God can be just in this, but we must believe it. While there are many mysteries in the faith, we are not called to believe that God is a "mystery" in the sense that He contradicts His own revealed character of justice and fairness.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The tension between divine determinism and human accountability is a long-standing philosophical problem within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** theologians have developed complex philosophical arguments (often termed "compatibilism") to reconcile the two, the tension remains. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, prioritizes the doctrine of God's meticulous sovereignty, and accountability is then defined in a way that is "compatible" with that premise, even if it strains the plain meaning of justice. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which maintains that genuine accountability requires genuine freedom of response, made possible by God's grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:19-21, Romans 3:19

**Verses of Correction:** John 3:19, Romans 2:5-6, Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:16, John 15:22

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that man is accountable for his inability often involves a **Category Error**. It confuses a state of being (a supposed metaphysical inability) with a moral action (a choice). Accountability, in any meaningful sense of the word, applies to actions and

choices. We hold people accountable for what they *do*, not for what they *are*. To hold someone accountable for a constitutional state they were born with is like holding a person with a genetic disease accountable for having that disease. The Bible, however, consistently holds people accountable for their *deeds* and their *unbelief*, which are presented as choices of a rebellious heart.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **redefines justice to fit a deterministic system**. In order to make determinism work, the definition of justice has to be changed. Instead of justice being about giving a person what they deserve based on their free choices, justice becomes merely the execution of God's sovereign will. In this framework, whatever God decrees is, by definition, "just." This is a philosophical move that makes God's justice seem arbitrary and tautological ("it is just because God decreed it"). The biblical view, however, is that God's decrees are just because they align with His eternal, unchanging, and righteous character.

#### **Question 40. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to believe?**

**Answer 40. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation is a divine paradox, a sacred tension that human logic cannot fully resolve but that Scripture holds in perfect harmony. The Bible is the architect of both pillars, and they stand together as the foundation of our faith. On one hand, God is absolutely sovereign. Salvation is "of the LORD"; it is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16). He initiates, He draws, He gives life. Without His sovereign grace, no one would be saved. On the other hand, man is completely responsible. The command to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is a genuine, binding command. The invitation to "whosoever will" is a sincere offer. The Bible does not present these as contradictory. The glorious truth is that **God's sovereignty does not cancel out man's responsibility; it establishes the very possibility of it**. He is so sovereign that He can create beings with genuine moral freedom and weave their free choices into His infallible plan. The attempt to build a logical system that elevates one of these truths by diminishing the other will always result in a distorted picture of God. We are called not to solve the paradox, but to stand in awe of it, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, precisely because it is God who is at work in us.

**Scripture References:** (Sovereignty) John 6:44, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:8-9, Jonah 2:9; (Responsibility) John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Joshua 24:15, Revelation 22:17; (Paradox) Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27-28

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The **rebuttal** from the hyper-Calvinist side is that this "paradox" is an intellectual compromise, a failure to follow the logic of sovereignty to its necessary conclusion of determinism. They argue that responsibility must be redefined to be "compatible" with determinism. The **rebuttal** from the Pelagian or open theist side is that a God who is truly sovereign in the Calvinistic sense cannot allow for genuine human freedom. Both sides make the same fundamental error: they assume that the relationship between the divine and human wills must be comprehensible to the finite human mind. They refuse to allow for a mystery that is rooted in the very nature of an infinite Creator interacting with His finite creation. The Bible simply asserts both truths and calls us to believe them.



**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This tension is the primary fault line in the debate between **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**. **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, following **Augustine and Calvin**, resolve the tension in favor of meticulous sovereignty. **Methodist, Pentecostal, and many Baptist** churches, following **Jacobus Arminius** (c. 1609) and **John Wesley** (18th century), resolve it in favor of a freedom of the will enabled by grace. Both systems are attempts to logically systematize what the Bible holds in paradoxical tension. Perhaps the most biblically faithful position is to refuse to build a system around either pole, and to preach both truths with equal vigor as the Scripture does.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For Sovereignty alone) Romans 9:16-21, Ephesians 1:11; (For Responsibility alone) Joshua 24:15, Ezekiel 18:31-32

**Verses of Correction:** Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, Genesis 50:20

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The attempt to resolve this tension by choosing one side over the other is the quintessential **False Dilemma**. It presents the issue as a binary choice: either divine determinism is true or human freedom is true. It fails to allow for the possibility that both are true in a way that transcends human logic. This is the ultimate "either-or" fallacy in theology. It's like arguing about light: one side says it's a wave, the other says it's a particle. They bring evidence for their side and point out the contradictions in the other. The truth of quantum mechanics is that it is somehow both. The truth of theology is that God is somehow completely sovereign and man is somehow completely responsible.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **anthropocentrism**, the idea that human beings and human reason are the measure of all things. Both extremes in this debate are deeply rationalistic. They assume that the reality of God's interaction with the world must conform to the principles of human logic. If it seems like a contradiction to us, it must be a contradiction. The biblical worldview, however, is theocentric. It starts with God, who is infinite and transcendent. It assumes that there will be things about His nature and His ways that are "past finding out." It calls for intellectual humility, the willingness to say, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us."

## **The Perseverance and Security of the Believer**

**Question 41. Does the Bible teach that once a person is saved, they are always saved, regardless of their subsequent actions?**

**Answer 41. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The popular slogan "once saved, always saved," understood as an unconditional guarantee of salvation regardless of a person's subsequent life, is a dangerous and unbiblical distortion of the doctrine of eternal security. The Bible does teach a profound security for the believer, but it is a security that is possessed by those who **abide in Christ and continue in the faith**. It is a conditional security. The Scriptures are filled with glorious promises of God's keeping power. Jesus said of His sheep, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). However, these promises are balanced by equally solemn warnings about the dire consequences of departing from the faith. The writer to

the Hebrews warns believers not to have an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). Jesus Himself taught that a branch "in me" that does not bear fruit will be taken away and cast into the fire (John 15:2, 6). The security of the believer is not like a vaccination that makes one immune to spiritual death regardless of their lifestyle. It is like the security of a mountain climber who is safe as long as he holds fast to the rope that is securely anchored to the rock. God's rope will never break, but the believer is commanded to hold on.

**Scripture References:** (Assurances) John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24; (Warnings) John 15:6, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 5:4, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-22

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that anyone who "falls away" was never truly saved in the first place. The go-to verse for this is 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." This verse, however, describes a specific historical situation and cannot be used as a universal rule to nullify all the other warnings in Scripture. The warnings in Hebrews, for example, are addressed to people who are described as having been "enlightened," having "tasted of the heavenly gift," and being "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is not the language of false profession. To argue that none of these people were ever truly saved is to do violence to the plain meaning of the text simply to protect a theological system. The Bible clearly allows for the possibility of genuine believers making a shipwreck of their faith.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Unconditional Eternal Security, or "Once Saved, Always Saved," is a hallmark of **Calvinism** (as the 'P' in TULIP, Perseverance of the Saints) and is also widely taught in many **Free Grace and independent Baptist** churches. The doctrine became a central point of contention during the Reformation. While **Martin Luther** held to a form of conditional security, **John Calvin** (1536) argued that the salvation of the elect was unchangeable. This view was solidified in the **Canons of Dort** (1619) and became a staple of Reformed theology. It is one of the most significant dividing lines between Calvinistic and Arminian/Wesleyan traditions.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, 1 John 2:19, Philippians 1:6, Ephesians 1:13-14

**Verses of Correction:** Hebrews 6:4-6, 2 Peter 2:20-21, John 15:2, Romans 11:22, Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1, Ezekiel 18:24

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that anyone who falls away was "never truly saved" is a classic **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial claim is, "No true believer can fall away." When a counterexample is presented from Scripture (like those described in Hebrews 6), the definition of "true believer" is retroactively changed to exclude the counterexample: "Well, they weren't a *true* believer." This makes the original claim unfalsifiable. No matter how much evidence is presented of believers falling away, the system is protected by simply redefining who counts as a "true believer." It's a circular argument that refuses to let the evidence challenge the presupposition.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a one-time, transactional event rather than an ongoing, relational covenant**. The "once saved, always saved" model treats salvation like a legal transaction, like paying off a mortgage. Once the final payment is made, the house is yours forever, regardless of what you do afterward. The Bible, however, presents salvation in the context of a living, organic, covenantal relationship, like a marriage or a branch connected to a vine. These relationships require ongoing faithfulness and abiding to be maintained. They are not static, one-time transactions, but living, dynamic connections that can be severed through unfaithfulness.

**Question 42. What are the biblical conditions for final salvation, as outlined in passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14?**

**Answer 42. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible is explicit that while our initial justification is by faith alone, our final salvation is conditioned upon our perseverance in that faith. Passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14 are not ambiguous. They are the clear architectural specifications for the Christian life. Paul tells the Colossians that Christ will present them holy and unblameable at the end, but he adds a crucial condition: **"if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."** The word "if" is a divine hinge upon which our final salvation turns. Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews states, "For we are made partakers of Christ, **if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.**" These verses, and many others like them, establish that the faith that saves is a faith that endures. This is not a doctrine of salvation by works or by human effort. It is the doctrine that genuine, saving faith will, by the power of God's sustaining grace, persevere. Endurance is not the *cause* of our salvation, but it is the necessary *evidence* of our salvation. The promise of glory is for those who finish the race.

**Scripture References:** Colossians 1:21-23, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 3:12-14, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:13, John 8:31, John 15:4-6, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 15:2, Galatians 6:9, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 2:10

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The common **rebuttal** is to argue that these conditional "if" clauses are not expressing a real possibility of failure for the true believer, but are simply describing the nature of true faith. The argument is that if a person *is* a true believer, they *will* continue. Therefore, the "if" is not a warning of a possible outcome, but a description of a certain one. This interpretation, however, drains the language of its natural force. A warning is only a real warning if the danger is real. If it is impossible for a true believer to fail to continue, then why are they so frequently and solemnly warned about that very possibility? It turns these earnest admonitions into a form of theological tautology: "You will be saved if you are saved." The plain sense of the text is that continuing in the faith is a real, ongoing responsibility for the believer.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The necessity of reinterpreting these clear conditional clauses is a burden carried by theological systems that teach unconditional eternal security, most notably **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system of **John Calvin**, finalized in the **Canons of Dort** (1619), insists that the elect will infallibly persevere. Therefore, verses like Colossians 1:23 and Hebrews 3:14 must be understood not as warnings of a real danger, but as marks by which the elect can be identified. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which takes these



conditions at face value as genuine requirements for final salvation, emphasizing the cooperative relationship between God's sustaining grace and the believer's enduring faith.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

**Verses of Correction:** Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:14, Matthew 24:13, John 15:6, Romans 11:22

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the "if" clauses are descriptive, not prescriptive, commits the **Argument by Reinterpretation** fallacy. It avoids the plain meaning of the evidence by changing the meaning of the key terms. The word "if" is a conditional term. The argument reinterprets it to be a descriptive term. It fundamentally changes the function of the word to make it fit the system. It's like seeing a sign that says, "You will be paid IF you finish the job," and arguing that the sign doesn't mean payment is conditioned on finishing, but is simply describing the fact that all who are paid will have, by definition, finished the job. It twists a condition into a description.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the Christian life in terms of a static status rather than a dynamic journey**. The deterministic model sees salvation as a legal status that is conferred at a single point in time and is thereafter unchangeable. The Bible, however, more frequently uses the language of a journey, a race, a fight, a walk. A journey has a starting point and a destination, and it requires continual progress. A race must be finished. A fight must be fought to the end. These metaphors all imply a process that requires endurance. By replacing the dynamic metaphor of a journey with the static metaphor of a legal status, the system loses the biblical emphasis on perseverance and the reality of the conditions for finishing well.

**Question 43. How do the numerous warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" apply to genuine believers?**

**Answer 43. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The numerous, solemn, and often terrifying warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" are addressed directly and unequivocally to **genuine believers**. To argue otherwise is to ignore the plain address of the epistles and the context of the warnings. These are not warnings to outsiders or to hypothetical "false professors." They are pastoral alarms sounded for the benefit of the saints. When the writer to the Hebrews warns, "Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12), he is writing to the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The warnings in Hebrews 6 describe people who were "once enlightened," had "tasted of the heavenly gift," and were "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is the language of genuine Christian experience. Paul warns the grafted-in Gentile believers in Rome that they too can be "cut off." Peter warns of those who have "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," who then become entangled again and are overcome. These warnings are real because the danger is real. They are the guardrails on the narrow path, reminding us that our security is found in abiding in Christ, not in presuming upon a past experience.

**Scripture References:** Hebrews 3:12, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:20-22, Romans 11:20-22, 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is the "hypothetical warning" theory. This argument claims that the warnings are real in their description of the danger, but hypothetical in their application to the elect. They are meant to be a means of grace to ensure that the elect *do* persevere, but they could never actually happen to a true believer. This makes God's warnings a form of psychological motivation that is not grounded in reality. It's like a parent warning a child, "Don't touch the stove, it's hot!" while knowing that there is an invisible force field that would prevent the child from ever actually touching it. The warning loses its integrity. Another **rebuttal** is the "false professor" argument, which claims these passages only describe people who looked like believers but never possessed true saving faith. This requires reinterpreting the very strong language of genuine spiritual experience (like "partakers of the Holy Ghost") to mean something less than what it plainly says.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to explain away these powerful warnings is a major theological project within **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)** and **Free Grace** circles. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as formulated by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, cannot allow for the possibility of a true believer apostatizing. Therefore, a complex hermeneutic is developed to argue that these warnings are either hypothetical or apply only to non-elect individuals within the covenant community. This contrasts sharply with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which has always held that these warnings are to be taken at face value as evidence of the real possibility of falling from grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 John 2:19, John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39

**Verses of Correction:** Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-21, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 10:12

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "hypothetical warning" argument is a form of **Special Pleading**. It creates a special category for biblical warnings that is unlike any other form of warning. In the real world, a warning is only meaningful if the danger is real. The argument creates a special rule for these specific texts, saying, "All other warnings in life are about real dangers, but these specific warnings in the Bible are about a danger that could never actually happen to the people being warned." This is an ad hoc rule created for the sole purpose of protecting a theological system from clear, contradictory evidence.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's primary purpose is to guarantee an outcome rather than to cultivate a relationship**. The deterministic model requires a system that guarantees the final salvation of the elect with 100% certainty. The warnings introduce an element of contingency and relational responsibility that is incompatible with this model. The biblical model, however, is deeply relational. A loving father warns his children of real dangers because he loves them and wants them to choose the path of life and safety. He does not issue hypothetical warnings to manipulate them into a predetermined outcome. The warnings are a real expression of God's pastoral heart for His people.

**Question 44. What does it mean to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) if salvation is already unconditionally guaranteed?**

**Answer 44. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Apostle Peter's command to "give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**" is a direct contradiction to the idea that salvation is an unconditionally guaranteed, static possession. If a believer's eternal destiny were already immutably fixed by a pre-temporal decree, there would be nothing to "make sure." The very language of the command implies that assurance is not something to be passively assumed, but something to be actively confirmed. How is it made sure? The context of the passage provides the clear answer. Peter instructs believers to diligently add to their faith a list of virtues: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He then concludes, "For if ye do these things, **ye shall never fall.**" Assurance, therefore, is not found by introspectively trying to discern if one is on a secret list of the elect. It is found by looking at the fruit of a transformed life. The command to "make it sure" is a call to a life of active, diligent, fruit-bearing faith. It presupposes that a lack of diligence can lead to a state of uncertainty and the real danger of falling.

**Scripture References:** 2 Peter 1:5-11, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, Hebrews 4:11, Hebrews 6:11-12, 2 Corinthians 13:5

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that "making it sure" does not mean making it a reality, but simply confirming it or proving it to oneself and others. The argument is that the election is already sure in God's mind, and our diligence simply provides us with the subjective assurance of that fact. While it is true that a holy life brings subjective assurance, this interpretation weakens the force of the command. Peter links this diligence directly to the promise that "ye shall never fall." This implies that the diligence is instrumental in the perseverance itself, not just in our awareness of it. It is not just about feeling sure; it is about *being* sure by continuing in the path of faith and obedience.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**, requires this verse to be interpreted in a purely subjective sense. Since the elect will infallibly persevere, the command cannot be about securing a future that is already guaranteed. It must be about gaining personal, psychological assurance. This interpretation was central to the Puritan tradition, which often led to an unhealthy and debilitating level of introspection as believers searched their souls for the "marks" of election. The **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, in contrast, sees this verse as a straightforward call to the real and necessary work of perseverance, through grace, in order to secure one's final salvation.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12

**Verses of Correction:** 2 Peter 1:10, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 13:5

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that this verse is only about subjective assurance commits the **Fallacy of Exclusion** (a form of suppressed evidence). It focuses on the subjective aspect of assurance while excluding the objective aspect of perseverance that is clearly linked in



the text ("if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"). It presents an incomplete picture of the passage's meaning. It's like reading a doctor's prescription that says, "Take this medicine daily to maintain your health and feel well," and then arguing that the medicine has nothing to do with actually *maintaining* health, but only with *feeling* well.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **draws a sharp distinction between objective reality and subjective experience**. This is a modern philosophical bias. The Bible, particularly in its wisdom literature and pastoral epistles, tends to see these as deeply integrated. What you *do* directly affects who you *are* and how you *feel*. The command to "make your calling sure" is not just about changing your perception; it is about continuing in a course of action that solidifies the reality. The objective reality of our salvation is maintained through the subjective and active experience of diligent faith, and from that flows the feeling of assurance.

**Question 45. Who are the "overcomers" in the book of Revelation, and what does their struggle imply about the Christian life?**

**Answer 45. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "overcomers" in the book of Revelation are the true, persevering saints who maintain their faith in Jesus and their faithful witness to the end, in the midst of a hostile and seductive world. The promises to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 are all specifically and exclusively directed to "him that **overcometh**." These are the ones who will eat of the tree of life, receive the crown of life, be clothed in white raiment, and whose names will not be blotted out of the book of life. The very concept of "overcoming" implies that the Christian life is a **real and arduous struggle**, not a passive state of guaranteed security. It is a battle, a race, a fight. There is a real enemy to be overcome (Satan, the "accuser of our brethren"), a real world system to be overcome ("Babylon the great"), and a real internal battle with the flesh to be won. The existence of a special category of "overcomers" who receive these glorious promises implies the existence of those who do not overcome, who give in to temptation, who compromise with the world, and who ultimately fall away. The Christian life is not a spectator sport; it is a call to be a victorious soldier in the army of God.

**Scripture References:** Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:26, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 15:2, Revelation 21:7, 1 John 5:4-5

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The common **rebuttal** is that all "true believers" are, by definition, overcomers. In this view, "overcoming" is not a description of a struggle that some might lose, but simply a synonym for "believer." This interpretation, however, flattens the text and removes the urgency from the promises. If every believer is automatically an overcomer, why are the promises framed as a special reward for those who achieve this status? It turns a powerful incentive into a simple description. The language of Revelation is clearly one of contrast and struggle. The promise is not to everyone in the church at Sardis, but specifically to the "few names... which have not defiled their garments." The call to overcome is a call to a victorious faith, not a description of an automatic status.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The reinterpretation of "overcomer" as a synonym for "every true believer" is a theological necessity for systems that teach unconditional eternal security, such as **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system cannot allow for a distinction between believers who persevere and those who do not. Therefore, the category of "overcomer" must be redefined to include all the elect. This view, which became standard in **Reformed** theology after **Calvin**, contrasts with the view of many early church writers and later **Anabaptist** and **Arminian** traditions, who saw the call to overcome as a real exhortation to perseverance in the face of the real possibility of failure.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 John 5:4 ("whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"), John 16:33

**Verses of Correction:** Revelation 2:7 (The promise is conditional: "To him that overcometh..."), Revelation 3:4-5 (A "few names" in Sardis had not defiled their garments, and the promise of not being blotted out is for the overcomer), Revelation 21:7-8 (Contrasts the overcomer with the "fearful, and unbelieving")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that all true believers are automatically overcomers commits the **Tautology** fallacy (a form of circular reasoning). A tautology is a statement that is true by definition. The argument defines a "true believer" as "one who overcomes," and then concludes that all true believers overcome. This tells us nothing new. It is a circular definition that avoids the real question: what does it mean to overcome, and is it possible for a believer to fail to do so? It's like saying, "All winning teams are teams that score more points." It's true by definition, but it doesn't explain how a team actually wins or if it's possible for them to lose.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **seeks to eliminate all risk and struggle from the doctrine of salvation**. This is a philosophical desire for absolute certainty and security. It creates a "safe" theological system where the outcome is guaranteed and there is no real danger. The Bible, however, presents a worldview that is filled with real risk, real struggle, and real calls to courageous, persevering faith. It is a story of warfare, not of quiet repose. The doctrine of the overcomer is a call to arms, an exhortation to fight the good fight. To redefine it as an automatic status is to replace the biblical narrative of spiritual warfare with a philosophical ideal of static security.

**Question 46. How does the parable of the sower (Matthew 13) illustrate the different responses to the Gospel and the possibility of falling away?**

**Answer 46. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The parable of the sower is Jesus' own masterclass on the different responses to the gospel, and it stands as a powerful, undeniable illustration of the possibility of falling away. Of the four types of soil that receive the good seed of the Word, three fail to produce lasting fruit. The stony ground represents those who hear the word and "anon **with joy receiveth it.**" This is a description of a genuine, initial conversion experience. Yet, because they have no root in themselves, "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is **offended,**" and falls away. The thorny ground represents those who also hear the word, but "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, **choke**

**the word**, and he becometh unfruitful." These are not pictures of people who were never really interested. They are pictures of promising beginnings that end in spiritual failure. The parable teaches that a positive initial response to the gospel is not a guarantee of final salvation. The only response that is ultimately vindicated is that of the good ground, which hears the word, understands it, and "beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." The parable is a solemn warning that the path of discipleship is fraught with dangers that can cause a genuine start to end in ruin.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-22

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is to argue that the stony and thorny ground hearers were never "truly" saved. They had a false or temporary faith, but were not among the elect. This interpretation is forced upon the text by the theological system. The parable itself describes them as "receiving" the word, even with joy. It does not label them as hypocrites from the outset. Their failure is not in their initial reception, but in their lack of endurance and their succumbing to the pressures of the world and persecution. To say they were never genuine is to impose a category ("the truly regenerate") that the parable itself does not use. The parable's focus is on the observable progress of the seed, and it clearly shows that some seed that sprouts can, in fact, wither and die.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to interpret the stony and thorny ground as representing "false professors" is a requirement for any system that teaches unconditional eternal security, particularly **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system, as laid out by **John Calvin** and his successors, cannot accommodate the idea of a genuine believer falling away. Therefore, the parable must be interpreted in a way that protects this core tenet. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the parable as a straightforward illustration of the different ways a person can respond to prevenient grace, including the real possibility of apostasy after an initial acceptance.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 John 2:19, John 10:28-29

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 13:20-22, Luke 8:13 ("which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"), Hebrews 6:4-6, 2 Peter 2:20

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the failed soils represent those who were never truly saved commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The initial, observable evidence is that they "received" the word. When this promising start fails, the goalpost for what constitutes a "real" start is moved. The new standard becomes, "Well, they didn't persevere, so their initial reception wasn't real." This retroactively changes the criteria for success to exclude all failures. It's like saying, "All the runners in this race are guaranteed to finish," and when a runner drops out, you say, "Well, he was never a *real* runner in this race." The definition is changed to protect the initial, faulty premise.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views conversion as a simple, one-time event rather than the beginning of a dynamic process**. This is a form of spiritual reductionism. It reduces the complex, organic process of growth, struggle, and perseverance described in the Bible to a single,



instantaneous, metaphysical transaction. The parable of the sower, however, is entirely about process. It is about what happens to the seed *after* it is sown. It is a story of growth, of roots, of choking thorns, and of fruit. To ignore the process and focus only on a supposed, invisible, initial transaction is to miss the entire point of the parable.

**Question 47. What is the nature of the "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, and what happens to branches that do not bear fruit (John 15)?**

**Answer 47. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "fruit" that believers are expected to bear is the tangible, visible evidence of a life that is vitally connected to Christ, the true vine. This fruit is multifaceted. It includes the development of Christ-like character, as described in the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It also includes righteous conduct and good works, which glorify the Father. Jesus' discourse on the vine and the branches in John 15, however, contains one of the most sobering warnings in all of Scripture. He states, "Every branch **in me** that beareth not fruit he **taketh away**." This is not a warning to those outside the vine, but to the branches that are "in me"—a clear reference to believers, to disciples. He goes on to say that such a fruitless branch "is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (v. 6). This passage teaches with unmistakable clarity that a genuine connection to Christ can be severed if it does not result in a life of fruitfulness. It presents a conditional security that is contingent on abiding in the vine.

**Scripture References:** John 15:1-8, Matthew 3:10, Matthew 7:16-20, Luke 13:6-9, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:11

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the branches that are "taken away" were never truly connected to the vine in a saving way. They were only outwardly or professionally attached, but not vitally united to Christ. This interpretation, however, struggles with the plain language of the text. Jesus says the branch is "in me." He does not qualify this with "outwardly" or "professedly." He is speaking to His disciples, warning them about the necessity of abiding. To say that a branch can be "in Christ" but not truly saved is to create a theological category that is not found in the text itself. It is an explanation designed to rescue the doctrine of unconditional security from a clear and powerful counterexample.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to reinterpret "in me" to mean something less than a saving relationship is a theological necessity for **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints cannot allow for a true branch "in Christ" to be cut off and burned. Therefore, the passage must be interpreted as referring to false disciples who were only part of the visible covenant community. This view, developed by **John Calvin** and his followers, is required to protect the system. In contrast, the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition has consistently pointed to John 15 as a primary proof text for the doctrine of conditional security and the real possibility of apostasy for a genuine believer.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 John 2:19, John 6:37, Romans 8:38-39

**Verses of Correction:** John 15:2, John 15:6, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 6:4-8

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the fruitless branches were never truly "in Christ" commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial premise is, "No true branch in Christ can be taken away and burned." When the evidence of John 15:2-6 is presented, which clearly shows branches "in me" being taken away and burned, the definition is changed: "Ah, but those were not *truly* in Christ in a saving way." This fallacy makes the original premise unfalsifiable by continually modifying the definition of the subject ("true branch") to exclude any and all counterexamples. It's a circular argument that refuses to deal with the text as it stands.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship with Christ in static, positional terms rather than dynamic, organic terms**. The system sees being "in Christ" as a fixed, legal position that, once obtained, can never be altered. The metaphor Jesus chooses, however, is deliberately organic and dynamic. A branch is a living thing. Its connection to the vine is a living connection that requires a continual flow of life and sustenance ("abiding"). An organic relationship can be severed. A living branch can wither and die. By replacing Jesus' organic metaphor with a static, philosophical concept of "position," the system strips the warning of its power and its plain meaning.

**Question 48. How does the teaching of Ezekiel 18 and 33, where a righteous man can turn from his righteousness and die in his sin, inform the doctrine of perseverance?**

**Answer 48. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The teaching of God through the prophet Ezekiel in chapters 18 and 33 provides a foundational Old Testament framework for understanding the doctrine of perseverance, and it stands in stark opposition to any notion of unconditional security. The principle of **individual and final accountability** is laid out with judicial clarity. God declares, "But when the **righteous turneth away from his righteousness**, and committeth iniquity... in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24). And conversely, "if the wicked turn from his sin... he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:14-15). This passage establishes that a person's eternal state is determined by their condition at the end of their life, not by a past period of righteousness. The righteous man's past good deeds "shall not be mentioned" if he turns to wickedness. This directly informs the New Testament warnings about perseverance. It shows that the principle of apostasy—that a person in a right relationship with God can turn away and be lost—is not a new concept, but is rooted in God's unchanging character of justice. It demonstrates that perseverance is not an automatic guarantee, but a continuous walk of faith and obedience.

**Scripture References:** Ezekiel 18:20-28, Ezekiel 33:12-20, Ezekiel 3:20-21, 2 Peter 2:20-21, Hebrews 10:38

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that this is an Old Covenant principle of works-righteousness and does not apply to the New Covenant of grace. This argument attempts to create a radical disjunction between the character of God in the Old and New Testaments. But the principles of God's justice are eternal. While the basis of our righteousness has changed (from works of the law to faith in Christ), the necessity of continuing in that righteousness has not. The New Testament is filled with echoes of Ezekiel's warning. 2 Peter 2:21 speaks of those who have known the way of righteousness and then turn from it, for whom "it had been better for them not

to have known the way." Hebrews 10:38 quotes the Old Testament: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The principle is the same: drawing back from a state of righteousness leads to condemnation.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to relegate Ezekiel's teaching to a bygone "dispensation of works" is a necessity for systems that teach unconditional eternal security, such as **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system of **John Calvin**, finalized at the **Synod of Dort**, insists that a saint will infallibly persevere. Therefore, a clear Old Testament passage teaching that a righteous man can fall away and perish must be quarantined and prevented from informing New Testament doctrine. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees a beautiful continuity in God's character and justice, and views Ezekiel 18 and 33 as providing the foundational grammar for understanding the New Testament's many warnings about apostasy.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:1 ("no condemnation"), Romans 11:29 ("gifts and calling of God are without repentance")

**Verses of Correction:** Ezekiel 18:24, Ezekiel 33:13, Ezekiel 33:18, Hebrews 10:26-27, 2 Peter 2:20-21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that Ezekiel's warnings are "Old Covenant only" commits the **Genetic Fallacy**. This fallacy dismisses an idea based on its origin rather than its content. The argument is, "This teaching comes from the Old Covenant, therefore it is not relevant to us." This ignores the fact that the principles of God's character, justice, and holiness are timeless and are revealed throughout the entire Bible. While the administrative details of the covenants may change, the nature of the God behind the covenants does not. It's like dismissing the principle "Thou shalt not murder" because it originated in the Old Covenant. The principle is eternally valid because it reflects the character of God.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **radical dispensationalism**, which creates an artificial and unbiblical wall between the Old and New Testaments. This philosophical approach to Scripture chops the Bible into distinct, almost unrelated epochs, with different rules for salvation and different expressions of God's character. The Bible, however, presents itself as a unified, progressive revelation of a single redemptive plan, centered on a single God whose character is immutable. The principles of His justice in Ezekiel are not contradicted in the New Testament; they are fulfilled and deepened in the context of the grace of Christ.

**Question 49. What is the "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16, and does it have implications for the security of the believer?**

**Answer 49. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "sin unto death" described by the Apostle John is a state of willful, high-handed, and unrepentant sin committed by a person who was once a brother in Christ. John makes a distinction between "a sin which is not unto death," for which believers should pray for their erring brother's restoration, and "a sin unto death," for which he says, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." While the specific sin is not defined, the context suggests it is a deliberate and final act of apostasy, a turning away from the truth so complete that



repentance is no longer possible (similar to the warning in Hebrews 6). The implications for the security of the believer are profound and sobering. The very existence of a "sin unto death" that can be committed by a "brother" proves that the believer's security is **not unconditional**. It demonstrates that it is possible for a person who has been part of the fellowship of believers to sin to such a degree that they forfeit their salvation and cross a point of no return. It is a solemn warning against presuming upon the grace of God and serves as a powerful refutation of any doctrine that teaches a believer is eternally secure regardless of their actions.

**Scripture References:** 1 John 5:16-17, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-29, Numbers 15:30-31, Matthew 12:31-32

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** One common **rebuttal** is to argue that the "sin unto death" refers only to physical death, not the loss of eternal salvation. The argument is that God may punish a believer's persistent sin by taking their physical life, but their soul remains saved. While God can and does discipline His children, sometimes severely, this interpretation seems to downplay the gravity of John's language and the parallel warnings in Hebrews, which clearly speak of eternal consequences. Another **rebuttal** is to claim that the person who commits this sin was never a "true" brother to begin with. This is the standard "No True Scotsman" argument, which redefines the subject to protect the theory. John, however, calls him a "brother," and the warning is given in the context of the life of the church.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**, is directly challenged by this passage. The system developed by **John Calvin** and his successors cannot allow for a true believer to commit a sin that leads to the loss of salvation. Therefore, commentators from this tradition must interpret the "sin unto death" as either referring to physical death or as a sin committed by a false professor. **John Wesley**, on the other hand, in the 18th century, saw this passage as clear evidence for his doctrine of conditional security, arguing that it was a plain warning that a true Christian could "make shipwreck of the faith" and be eternally lost.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 5:5

**Verses of Correction:** 1 John 5:16, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-27, 2 Peter 2:20-21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the "sin unto death" refers only to physical death for a believer is an example of an **Appeal to a Lesser Consequence**. It attempts to soften the force of a clear warning by reducing the severity of the stated outcome. The context of 1 John is about the contrast between eternal life and death. To suddenly insert the idea of mere physical death into this context is to change the terms of the discussion. It's like a judge warning a traitor that his crime is "punishable by removal from the country," and then arguing that this only means he'll be sent on a short vacation, not permanently exiled. The interpretation minimizes the gravity of the warning to make it less threatening to a preconceived belief.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **salvation is an indestructible, metaphysical substance rather than a destructible, relational state**. The system views salvation as a "thing" that is given to a

person, an object that cannot be lost or broken. The Bible, however, presents salvation as a state of being in a right relationship with God through Christ. Relationships can be broken. Covenants can be violated. Life can be forfeited. The "sin unto death" is the act that definitively severs that life-giving relationship. The philosophical error is to reify salvation, turning it from a living connection into an unbreakable object, which makes the idea of a "sin unto death" a logical impossibility within the system.

**Question 50. How do we reconcile the promises of God's keeping power (John 10:28-29) with the warnings against apostasy?**

**Answer 50. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The glorious promises of God's keeping power and the solemn warnings against apostasy are not contradictory; they are two sides of the same coin of conditional security. They are reconciled by understanding that God's power **keeps the believer who is abiding in faith**. The promise in John 10:28-29 is magnificent: "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But to whom is this promise made? Jesus specifies in the preceding verse: "**My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and **they follow me**." The promise is for the obedient, following sheep. The warnings against apostasy, found throughout the New Testament, are addressed to those same sheep, cautioning them about the real danger of ceasing to follow, of developing an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). There is no contradiction here. God's hand is omnipotent to hold any who desire to be held, but He will not hold by force a sheep that is determined to leap from the fold. The promises are the assurance of God's faithfulness to the covenant; the warnings are the reminder of our responsibility within that covenant. Our security is in Christ, and we are kept secure as we, by His grace, keep ourselves in Him.

**Scripture References:** (Promises) John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24; (Warnings) Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-6, John 15:6, Romans 11:22; (Reconciliation) Jude 1:21 ("Keep yourselves in the love of God")

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the warnings are merely the means God uses to keep the elect from apostatizing. In this view, the warnings are real, but they will always be effective for the true elect, so the possibility of a true elect person finally falling away is zero. This makes the warnings a form of divine psychology rather than a statement about a real possibility. It also fails to account for the fact that the Bible records instances of people who seem to meet every criterion of a believer and yet fall away (like those in Hebrews 6). The simpler explanation is that the promises apply to those who heed the warnings, and the warnings apply to those who begin to neglect the promises.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need to see the warnings as hypothetical or as merely a means to an inevitable end is a requirement of **Calvinistic** theology. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as articulated by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, does not allow for the real possibility of apostasy for the elect. Therefore, the relationship between the promises and warnings must be framed in a way that eliminates any genuine contingency. The **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, articulated by figures like **Jacobus Arminius** (c. 1609) and **John Wesley** (18th century), reconciles the passages by affirming that the promises are for the believing and abiding, and the warnings are for those who cease to believe and abide, thus upholding a conditional security.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

**Verses of Correction:** Hebrews 3:12-14, Romans 11:22, John 15:6, Colossians 1:23, Jude 1:21

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the warnings are just the "means" to guarantee an already certain outcome can be seen as a form of the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The initial goalpost is the clear meaning of a warning (a statement about a real, avoidable danger). When it's shown that this contradicts the system, the goalpost is moved. The new definition of a warning becomes "a psychological tool God uses to produce a predetermined result." The very nature of what a "warning" is has been changed to protect the theological system. It's an arbitrary redefinition to avoid the force of the evidence.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between God and the believer in terms of a unilateral monologue rather than a bilateral dialogue**. The deterministic model sees God as the only true actor. His promises are declarations of what He will do, and His warnings are simply part of the mechanism by which He does it. The human being is the passive recipient. The Bible, however, presents a dialogical relationship. God makes promises, and we are called to trust them. God issues warnings, and we are called to heed them. Our response is a real and meaningful part of the ongoing relationship. The error is to reduce this dynamic, two-way covenantal dialogue to a one-way, deterministic divine monologue.

## **The Logical and Moral Implications of Calvinism**

**Question 51. If God has unconditionally predestined some to salvation and others to damnation, can He be considered the author of sin?**

**Answer 51. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** If one builds a theological structure upon the premise that God has unconditionally and meticulously predestined "whatsoever comes to pass," including every thought, choice, and action of every person, then the conclusion that He is the ultimate author of sin becomes the unavoidable, albeit horrifying, cornerstone of that very structure. Though proponents of such a system may construct elaborate philosophical firewalls to protect God's character, the raw logic is inescapable. If God decreed the fall of Adam, and decreed every subsequent sinful act that followed, then He is not a passive permitter of sin, but its ultimate, primary cause. The sinner becomes merely the secondary cause, the instrument through which the divine decree is executed. Is the hammer responsible for the blow, or the carpenter who swings it? The Bible, however, presents a radically different architect. It reveals a God who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). It declares, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). The scriptural testimony is that God hates sin, is separate from sin, and judges sin. To make Him its author is to **malign His holy character** and to contradict the very foundation of biblical morality. The Bible places the origin and responsibility of sin squarely on the free, rebellious choices of His creatures, both angelic and human.

**Scripture References:** James 1:13-15, 1 John 1:5, Habakkuk 1:13, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 5:4, Genesis 1:31, Genesis 50:20, Acts 2:23



**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The most common **rebuttal** is the appeal to "secondary causes" or "concurrence." This argument posits that God decrees the sinful act, but the creature is the one who carries it out with a sinful motive, and is therefore responsible. This is a philosophical distinction without a real difference. If God's decree is the ultimate, determining cause that makes the sinful choice inevitable, then He is still the ultimate author of the act. It is like a man programming a robot to commit a crime; the robot is the secondary cause, but the programmer is the responsible author. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to mystery, claiming we cannot understand how God can ordain sin without being culpable for it. While God's ways are higher than our ways, we are not called to believe in a mystery that requires us to affirm a logical contradiction or to malign the revealed character of God as perfectly holy.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This profound theological problem is inherent in **hyper-Calvinism**, the most rigid form of the theology taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. While **John Calvin** himself labored to avoid making God the author of sin, his system of meticulous, universal divine decrees, as articulated in his *Institutes* (1536), logically leads to this conclusion. His successors, like **Theodore Beza**, solidified this deterministic framework. This stands in stark contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which fiercely protects God's holiness by insisting that His sovereignty does not extend to the causation of sin, but rather to His permission of the free choices of His creatures.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:38, Proverbs 16:4, Romans 9:18-21, Acts 4:27-28

**Verses of Correction:** James 1:13, 1 John 1:5, Habakkuk 1:13, Psalm 92:15, Deuteronomy 32:4, 1 Corinthians 14:33

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that God decrees sin but is not its author commits the **Fallacy of Distinction Without a Difference**. It creates a semantic distinction ("primary cause" vs. "secondary cause") that has no practical difference in assigning ultimate responsibility. If the primary cause makes the secondary cause inevitable, the primary cause is the author of the final result. It's like a mob boss ordering a hit on someone. The hitman is the secondary cause who pulls the trigger, but the mob boss is the author of the murder. To argue otherwise is to play a word game that obscures the reality of moral responsibility.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **hard determinism**. This philosophical position holds that every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature. When applied to theology, God's decree becomes the ultimate antecedent condition that necessitates all subsequent events, including human choices. This reduces human beings to complex cogs in a cosmic machine, stripping them of genuine moral agency. The Bible, in contrast, operates on a framework of soft determinism or libertarian freedom, where God's sovereignty and human agency are held in a compatible, albeit mysterious, relationship.

**Question 52. How does the doctrine of unconditional reprobation affect our understanding of God's justice and fairness?**

**Answer 52. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The doctrine of unconditional reprobation—the belief that God, before the foundation of the world, unconditionally decreed to pass over the majority of humanity and ordain them to eternal damnation for His own glory—is a grotesque caricature of biblical justice. It presents a vision of God that is more akin to a cruel, arbitrary tyrant than the righteous Judge of all the earth. The Bible's foundation for justice is righteousness, impartiality, and equity. God's judgment is never arbitrary; it is always "according to truth" and "according to their works." The doctrine of reprobation, however, posits a judgment that is predetermined without any regard to the individual's choices or deeds. It means God creates beings with the express purpose of condemning them for being the very thing He decreed them to be. How can it be just to condemn a person for a fate that was sealed before they ever drew a breath? It turns the final judgment into a **solemn farce**, a mere public execution of a secret, pre-written sentence. The God of the Bible, however, is the one who pleads with the wicked to turn and live, who takes no pleasure in their death, and whose justice is so perfect that on the final day, "every mouth may be stopped" (Romans 3:19), not by a display of raw power, but by the undeniable righteousness of His verdict.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 18:25, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 9:8, Psalm 96:13, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:2-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, 1 Peter 1:17, Revelation 20:12-13

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is the appeal to God's absolute sovereignty, particularly as framed in Romans 9:20-21: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" This is used to argue that God, as Creator, has the right to do whatever He pleases with His creation, and it is not for us to question His justice. This argument, however, rips the potter analogy from its Old Testament context (Jeremiah 18), where the potter's freedom to reshape the clay is conditioned on the clay's response. More importantly, it assumes that God's sovereignty is His only attribute. The Bible reveals a God whose sovereignty always acts in perfect harmony with His justice, goodness, and love. He is not a potter who creates vessels simply to enjoy the act of smashing them.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Reprobation (sometimes called "double predestination") is the dark corollary to Unconditional Election in **high-Calvinism**. While some Calvinists try to soften it (by speaking of "passing over" rather than active reprobation), the logical conclusion of the system is unavoidable. This doctrine was taught by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes*, where he called it the "dreadful decree." It was solidified by his followers at the **Synod of Dort** (1619). This is one of the most controversial points of the system and has been rejected by the vast majority of Christendom, including **Lutherans, Arminians, Wesleyans, and Anabaptists**, as being inconsistent with the revealed character of God.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:18-23, 1 Peter 2:8, Jude 1:4, Proverbs 16:4

**Verses of Correction:** Genesis 18:25, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Romans 2:11

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for reprobation based on the "potter and clay" analogy often involves the **Appeal to Power** fallacy (*argumentum ad baculum*). This fallacy asserts that a position is true simply because the one making the claim has the power to enforce it. The argument

is essentially, "God is sovereign and all-powerful, therefore whatever He does is just, and you have no right to question it." This silences legitimate moral and theological questions by appealing to raw power rather than to reason, Scripture, or God's revealed character. Might does not make right, and the God of the Bible is not a being who needs to rely on such a fallacious appeal. His actions are just because they are righteous, not just because He is powerful.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **divorces God's will from His nature**. This is a philosophical position known as voluntarism, which claims that something is good simply because God wills it. The biblical position, however, is that God wills something because it is good—that is, because it aligns with His eternal, unchanging, and righteous nature. The voluntarist framework allows for a God who could will something that seems unjust or cruel, and it would still be, by definition, "good." The biblical framework insists that God's will is always an expression of His perfectly good and just character. Reprobation is conceivable within a voluntarist framework, but not within a biblical one.

**Question 53. If a person's eternal destiny is fixed, what is the purpose of the final judgment according to works?**

**Answer 53. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** If a person's eternal destiny is immutably fixed by an unconditional, pre-temporal decree, then the great and terrible Day of Judgment is stripped of its primary purpose and reduced to a mere **public spectacle**. The Bible describes the final judgment as a genuine and solemn reckoning, where "the books were opened" and the dead were "judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**" (Revelation 20:12). This is the language of evidence, of accountability, of a just verdict being rendered based on the life a person has lived. However, if the verdict of "saved" or "damned" was already determined before the foundation of the world, then the works are not the basis for the judgment at all. They become, at best, the public evidence used to vindicate God's pre-ordained decree. The judgment loses its function as a moment of ultimate, personal accountability and becomes, instead, a divine sentencing hearing where the sentence was written long before the trial. The biblical picture, however, is of a real judgment where a person's works are the true and accurate reflection of their heart's faith or unbelief, which is the very basis upon which the just sentence of God is pronounced.

**Scripture References:** Revelation 20:12-13, Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Peter 1:17, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Matthew 12:36-37

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that the judgment according to works is not to determine destiny, but to determine degrees of reward for the saved and degrees of punishment for the damned. While the Bible does speak of rewards for believers, this interpretation fails to account for the primary function of the Great White Throne judgment, which is to determine entry into the lake of fire. The basis for this final judgment is explicitly stated: "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). The judgment according to works serves to demonstrate *why* their name was not in the book (or was blotted out). It is about the basis for condemnation, not just the severity of it. The works are the evidence that proves the justice of the final verdict.



**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This is a point of logical tension within **Calvinistic** theology. While affirming the biblical doctrine of a final judgment according to works, the system's commitment to unconditional predestination requires that the purpose of this judgment be reinterpreted. **John Calvin** and the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646) teach that the judgment serves to manifest the glory of God's mercy in the elect and His justice in the reprobate. In this view, the works do not determine the outcome but merely demonstrate the righteousness of the predetermined outcome. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the judgment as a genuine reckoning where a person's works serve as the definitive evidence of the faith (or lack thereof) that determines their eternal destiny.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:22-23, John 5:24, Romans 8:1

**Verses of Correction:** Revelation 20:12-13, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 2:6-8, Matthew 16:27

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the judgment only serves to vindicate God's prior decree commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The Bible sets the goalpost for the purpose of judgment: "God shall bring every work into judgment... whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). It is a comprehensive assessment. The deterministic view moves the goalpost, claiming the purpose is not assessment, but demonstration. It changes the fundamental purpose of the event to make it fit the system. It's like a student who fails an exam, and the teacher says, "The purpose of this exam was not to see if you learned the material, but to demonstrate that my initial prediction that you would fail was correct."

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views history as a script written for the benefit of the audience (the angels and saints) rather than a real drama involving the actors (humanity)**. In this philosophical view, historical events, including the final judgment, are not primarily about the participants, but are staged to demonstrate a truth to the spectators. The Bible, however, presents a profoundly different picture. The judgment is a terrifyingly real and personal event for the one being judged. It is the moment of ultimate accountability. While it certainly will display God's glory, its primary focus is the just and final disposition of every human soul based on their life and their response to God's grace.

#### **Question 54. How does the doctrine of limited atonement impact the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel?**

**Answer 54. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The doctrine of limited atonement, which teaches that Christ's death was intended to save only the elect, strikes at the very heart of the sincerity of the gospel offer. If the provision of salvation was not made for all, then the invitation to all cannot be genuine. The Bible presents a God who commands His gospel to be preached to "every creature" and who invites "whosoever will" to come and take the water of life freely. This is the language of a universal, bona fide offer. However, if Christ did not die for the person hearing that offer, then what exactly is being offered to them? It is an invitation to a feast for which no place has been set. It is an offer of a pardon that has not been written. This turns the gospel call into a **cruel and disingenuous charade**. A truthful God cannot make a false offer. The universal call of the gospel requires a universal provision. The fact that God sincerely invites all to be saved

is one of the most powerful proofs that Christ's death was sufficient for all. To believe otherwise is to embrace a view of God who speaks with a forked tongue, whose revealed will to save all is contradicted by a secret will to save only a few.

**Scripture References:** John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Hebrews 2:9, Mark 16:15, Revelation 22:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that the gospel offer is sincere in that it is a true statement of the *only way* of salvation, and it sincerely calls all men to their duty to repent and believe, even if they are unable to do so. This is a semantic shell game. An offer is not just a statement of fact; it is the presentation of a real possibility. To offer a drowning man a rope that is intentionally kept just out of his reach is not a sincere offer of rescue. Another **rebuttal** is that the offer is sufficient to hold the non-elect accountable for their rejection. This, again, paints a monstrous picture of God, where the purpose of the gospel call for the non-elect is not salvation, but the accumulation of greater guilt. This is contrary to the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of Limited Atonement is the 'L' in the TULIP acronym of **Calvinism** and is a necessary logical entailment of the system. If election is unconditional, then the atonement must be limited to the elect. This doctrine, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, was a point of major controversy from its inception. It was one of the key issues debated at the **Synod of Dort** (1619), which condemned the Arminian view of a universal atonement. The tension it creates with the universal call of the gospel has led some, like the 17th-century theologian **Moyse Amyraut**, to propose a modified "four-point" Calvinism that affirms a universal atonement.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:11, John 17:9, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25

**Verses of Correction:** 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, John 3:16

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for a sincere universal offer alongside a limited atonement often involves the **Fallacy of Equivocation** on the word "offer." In normal language, an "offer" implies the availability of the thing being offered. The Calvinistic use of "offer" in this context is different. It means something like "a declaration of the terms of salvation which you are obligated to meet, even if you are unable to and even if the salvation itself has not been provided for you." By using the common word "offer" but infusing it with a highly specialized and unusual theological meaning, the argument can create the illusion of sincerity while emptying the word of its plain, commonsense meaning.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **prioritizes the logical tidiness of a closed system over the relational integrity of God's character**. The system requires a limited atonement to be logically consistent. To protect that consistency, it is willing to sacrifice the sincerity of God's universal invitations. It is a philosophical choice that values systematic coherence above the plain, relational truth of a God who so loved *the world*. The Bible does not present a tidy philosophical system; it

presents a person, a loving Father, whose invitations are as sincere as His tears over a rebellious Jerusalem.

**Question 55. If all things are decreed by God, does this render prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace unnecessary?**

**Answer 55. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** While proponents of determinism will argue that God decrees the means as well as the ends, the doctrine that all things are meticulously and unchangeably decreed by God logically **undermines the necessity and urgency** of prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace. The Bible presents these activities as real, dynamic interactions that genuinely change things. Prayer is not a monologue to inform God of what He has already decreed; it is a dialogue where the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Evangelism is not the mere act of discovering who the elect are; it is a desperate, persuasive plea for sinners to be reconciled to God, with eternal destinies hanging in the balance. If the number and identity of the elect are fixed from eternity, and their salvation is irresistibly secured, then these activities are reduced from being instrumental causes to being merely the decreed script that the actors must follow. Why pray with agonizing fervency for the salvation of a loved one if their fate is already sealed? Why risk one's life to preach the gospel in a hostile land if the outcome is already guaranteed? The biblical motivation for these means of grace is rooted in the belief that they are the God-ordained, but not guaranteed, means of changing hearts and shaping destinies.

**Scripture References:** James 5:16, Luke 18:1-8, Colossians 4:2-4, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, 2 Timothy 2:24-26

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is that God has not only decreed the end (the salvation of the elect), but He has also decreed the means to that end (the prayers of the saints and the preaching of the gospel). Therefore, we pray and evangelize because God has decreed that our prayers and evangelism are the instruments He will use to bring His elect to salvation. This argument, while logically clever, still fails to capture the biblical spirit of these activities. It turns a dynamic, relational struggle into a mechanical, predetermined process. It doesn't account for the genuine sense of contingency and urgency that pervades the biblical accounts of prayer and evangelism. Paul did not see himself as a cog in a machine, but as a co-laborer with God, travailing in birth for souls.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This is a point of significant practical tension within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches have a rich history of missions and prayer, it is often in spite of, rather than because of, the logical implications of their deterministic system. The perceived lack of evangelistic fervor in some hyper-Calvinistic circles is a direct result of following this doctrine to its logical conclusion. The system of **John Calvin** tried to hold both truths, but the tension is palpable. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which has historically been the driving force behind many of the great missionary and revival movements, precisely because its theology provides a powerful and coherent motivation for evangelism and intercessory prayer.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Ephesians 1:11, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30



**Verses of Correction:** James 5:16, Ezekiel 22:30, 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 10:14-15, 1 Corinthians 9:22

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that God decrees the means as well as the ends, when used to defend the necessity of prayer, can be seen as a **Causal Fallacy** (specifically, confusing correlation with causation in a deterministic system). In a system where everything is decreed, prayer does not *cause* the outcome. It is merely *correlated* with the outcome because both the prayer and the outcome were decreed to happen together. The prayer becomes a symptom, not a cause. It's like arguing that the rooster's crowing is the necessary means to the end of the sun rising. The two events are correlated, but one does not cause the other; a third factor (the rotation of the earth) causes both. In the deterministic system, God's decree is the third factor that causes both the prayer and the result.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's interaction with the world in terms of a closed, non-interactive system**. This is the philosophical model of deism or fatalism. Once the system is set in motion by God's decree, it unfolds according to the pre-written script, with no real, dynamic interaction. The Bible, however, presents an open, interactive system. It is a world where God genuinely responds to the prayers of His people, where He relents from judgment in response to repentance, and where the course of events can be altered by the intercession of the saints. It is a relational universe, not a mechanical one.

#### **Question 56. How does the Calvinistic system address the problem of evil and suffering in the world?**

**Answer 56. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Calvinistic system addresses the profound problem of evil and suffering by placing it entirely within the scope of God's meticulous, sovereign, and permissive decree. In this architectural framework, nothing, not even the most horrific act of evil or the most agonizing moment of suffering, occurs outside of God's ultimate plan and purpose. The fall of Satan, the sin of Adam, every war, every disease, every tear—all are understood to be ordained by God for a greater, albeit often mysterious, purpose: the ultimate manifestation of His own glory. This solution offers a form of intellectual comfort by providing a comprehensive, all-encompassing answer that leaves no event to random chance. However, it achieves this comprehensiveness at an immense theological cost: it makes God the ultimate author of the evil and suffering He claims to hate. It presents a God who decrees the very thing His law forbids. The Bible, in contrast, presents a more complex and relational picture. It shows a God who is sovereign *over* evil, able to restrain it, permit it for His own purposes, and ultimately defeat it, but who is never its **originator or author**. The Bible attributes evil to the rebellious, free choices of created beings, and it portrays God not as the impassive architect of suffering, but as the compassionate Father who enters into our suffering to bring redemption.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 50:20, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:38, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:17-22, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27-28

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is the appeal to the "greater good." The argument is that God ordains evil and suffering as a necessary means to achieve a greater good, such as the

display of His justice in punishing sin and His mercy in saving the elect. This is often illustrated by the cross, where God used the most evil act in history to bring about the greatest good. While it is true that God can bring good out of evil, this does not mean He authors the evil itself. There is a profound difference between a general who masterfully turns the enemy's attack into a victory, and a general who secretly orders his own troops to be attacked so that he can demonstrate his strategic brilliance. The "greater good" argument, in its deterministic form, leans toward the latter.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This particular theodicy (an explanation for the problem of evil) is a hallmark of **strict Calvinism**. The system's commitment to meticulous divine sovereignty, as articulated by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, logically requires that evil be included within God's decree. This is often referred to as "compatibilism." This view is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It is one of the most difficult and pastorally problematic aspects of the system. It contrasts sharply with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** "free will defense," which attributes evil to the free, contingent choices of humans and angels, which God permitted but did not decree.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Isaiah 45:7 ("I make peace, and create evil"), Amos 3:6 ("shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"), Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

**Verses of Correction:** James 1:13 ("God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man"), Habakkuk 1:13 ("Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil"), 1 John 1:5 ("God is light, and in him is no darkness at all")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that God ordains evil for a greater good can, in its extreme form, become a version of the **Ends Justify the Means** fallacy. This fallacy argues that a goal is so noble that any method of achieving it, no matter how immoral, is justified. While God can and does bring good from evil, the deterministic view implies that God *chose* evil as His preferred means to His end. The Bible, however, presents a God who works His will in a world that is already fallen due to the free choices of His creatures. He is a redeemer who works within the tragic reality of evil, not a cosmic chess player who ordains evil as a necessary move in His game.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's glory as something that needed the existence of sin and hell to be fully displayed**. This is a philosophical speculation that is not explicitly taught in Scripture. It presumes that God's mercy could not be known without sin, and His justice could not be known without hell. The Bible, however, presents a God who is eternally glorious in His own triune nature, apart from creation. While He does display His glory through His redemptive work in a fallen world, it is a speculative leap to say that He therefore *needed* to ordain the fall to achieve this. It is a philosophical theodicy that risks making evil a necessary and integral part of God's eternal plan.

**Question 57. Does the doctrine of unconditional election foster humility or a sense of spiritual elitism?**

**Answer 57. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** While proponents of unconditional election argue that it ought to produce profound humility, its practical and psychological tendency

throughout history has often been to foster a subtle but pervasive **spiritual elitism**. The argument for humility is that if salvation is entirely of God's sovereign choice, with no contribution from the individual, then there is no room for boasting. In theory, this is true. However, the belief that one has been chosen from eternity as a special object of God's saving love, while the vast majority of humanity has been passed over or ordained to damnation, can easily morph into a sense of being part of an exclusive, celestial in-group. It can create a "we-they" mentality that looks upon the "non-elect" with a mixture of pity and a sense of detached superiority. True biblical humility is not born from the belief that we were the passive recipients of an exclusive and arbitrary decree. It is born from the staggering realization that God's grace was offered to all, that we were just as rebellious and undeserving as anyone else, and that we are saved only because we cast ourselves, by His enabling grace, upon a mercy that was wide enough to include our worst enemy. The ground is truly level at the foot of the cross; unconditional election subtly tilts that ground.

**Scripture References:** Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Galatians 6:3, Philippians 2:3, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5-6

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** will be to quote 1 Corinthians 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" This is used to argue that any view that includes human choice allows for boasting, whereas the doctrine of unconditional election removes all grounds for boasting. This argument, however, creates a false dilemma. A faith that is itself a response to enabling grace is not a meritorious work. To believe is simply to receive a gift. Is there any glory in a beggar who accepts a handout? The glory belongs to the giver. The Arminian/Wesleyan position does not teach that faith is a "work" that earns salvation; it is the empty hand that receives it. The potential for pride exists in any theological system, but the structure of unconditional election provides a unique and fertile ground for it to grow.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The potential for spiritual elitism has been a recurring critique of **Calvinism** throughout its history. While many individual Calvinists are genuinely humble people, the system itself has been associated with a certain intellectual and spiritual pride. The history of the **Puritans** in New England, for example, shows a society where the "elect" held a privileged and often severe position over the rest of the community. The harshness of the **Synod of Dort** (1619) in its condemnation of the Arminians is another historical example. This tendency was noted by critics like **John Wesley** in the 18th century, who argued that the doctrine tended to produce a "sour godliness" rather than the joyful humility of a forgiven sinner.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 Corinthians 4:7, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Verses of Correction:** Luke 18:9-14 (The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican), Philippians 2:3, Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 5:5

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that unconditional election is the only basis for true humility commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents only two options: either you believe in unconditional election and are truly humble, or you believe that faith is a choice and you are therefore prideful and boasting in your works. This ignores the vast middle ground of biblical teaching, where a Spirit-enabled faith is not a meritorious work but a humble reception of grace.



It's like arguing, "Either you admit the lottery company forced you to win, or you are pridefully boasting that you bought the ticket yourself." It ignores the humble gratitude of simply accepting a gift.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human action in a zero-sum relationship with divine grace.** This philosophical model assumes that if human beings contribute anything to the process, even the act of faith, it must detract from God's glory. So, to maximize God's glory, human action must be reduced to zero. The Bible, however, presents a different model. God is glorified when His creatures respond to Him in faith and obedience. He is glorified by our worship, our love, our good works. The relationship is not zero-sum; it is synergistic. God's grace is not magnified by our passivity, but by our active, joyful, and willing response to His love.

**Question 58. How does the belief in irresistible grace affect personal responsibility and the motivation for holy living?**

**Answer 58. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** While not its intention, the belief in irresistible grace, especially when coupled with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, can have a corrosive effect on a believer's sense of urgent personal responsibility and their motivation for diligent, holy living. The Bible is filled with active, strenuous language regarding the Christian life. We are commanded to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," to "fight the good fight of faith," and to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." This is the language of effort, of struggle, of a race to be run. If, however, one believes that their salvation is not only initiated but also infallibly and irresistibly carried to completion by divine grace, the "fear and trembling" can easily be replaced by a dangerous complacency. The motivation for a radical pursuit of holiness can be blunted if one believes their final destination is guaranteed regardless of their performance in the race. The biblical model, in contrast, creates a healthy, dynamic tension. It motivates us with the glorious promises of God's sustaining grace while simultaneously spurring us on with the solemn warnings of the consequences of spiritual laziness and disobedience. It is this very tension that produces a life of watchful, diligent, and responsible faith.

**Scripture References:** Philippians 2:12, Luke 13:24, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Peter 1:10, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 4:11, Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:14

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that true, irresistible grace will inevitably produce a desire for holiness. The argument is that the regenerate person *will* want to live a holy life, so the motivation is not a problem. While it is true that a new nature desires to please God, this argument underestimates the ongoing power of the flesh and the reality of spiritual warfare. The Bible portrays sanctification through faith in the one sacrifice of Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that the primary motivation for holiness should be gratitude, not fear of consequences. While gratitude is a powerful motivator, the Bible is not shy about using both positive and negative motivations. The "terror of the Lord" and the "fear of God" are presented as legitimate and healthy motivators for the believer.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This potential for antinomianism (the belief that one is not bound by moral law) has been a recurring criticism of **Calvinism** since the Reformation. While mainstream **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches strongly teach the necessity of sanctification, the internal logic of their system can be misused to justify spiritual laxity. This is particularly true in some forms of **Free Grace** theology, which can take the doctrine of eternal security to an extreme that detaches it almost entirely from the believer's actual life. This was a major point of contention for **John Wesley** in the 18th century, who argued that the Calvinistic system, by removing the healthy fear of falling away, inadvertently cut the "sinews of all holy living."

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Philippians 1:6, Romans 6:14, Jude 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

**Verses of Correction:** Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Hebrews 12:14, 2 Peter 1:10, Romans 8:13

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that irresistible grace automatically produces holiness can fall into the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The premise is, "A person with irresistible grace will live a holy life." When confronted with a professing Calvinist who lives an unholy life, the response is often, "Well, they must not have truly received irresistible grace." This protects the theory by redefining the subject to exclude any counterexamples. It avoids the difficult pastoral reality that believers, even those with a sound theological framework, still struggle mightily with sin and need the motivation of both promises and warnings.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human motivation in overly simplistic and monistic terms**. It assumes that if a person has a new nature, that new nature will be the sole and determining driver of all their actions. The Bible, however, presents a more complex, dualistic picture of the believer's internal life. There is an ongoing war between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" (Galatians 5:17). The believer has a new nature, but the old nature has not been eradicated. Motivation is therefore a complex issue, requiring not just the existence of a new nature, but the diligent, moment-by-moment choice to "walk in the Spirit" and "mortify the deeds of the body."

**Question 59. If God is the ultimate cause of all things, including unbelief, how can He be said to take "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11)?**

**Answer 59. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The solemn, covenantal oath of God in Ezekiel 33:11 is a direct and irreconcilable contradiction to any system that makes Him the ultimate cause of unbelief. God declares, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have **no pleasure in the death of the wicked**; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is one of the clearest revelations of the heart of God in all of Scripture. It is a passionate, earnest plea, revealing His genuine desire for the salvation of the very people who are perishing. If, however, God has eternally and unchangeably decreed that these same wicked people would live in unbelief and be damned, then this verse becomes a piece of divine double-talk. How can God take no pleasure in an outcome that He Himself has sovereignly and meticulously ordained? It would mean His revealed desire is the opposite of His secret decree. This portrays a God who is either insincere or internally conflicted. The only way to preserve the integrity of God's character and the plain meaning of this

text is to believe that God's pleasure is indeed for all to turn and live, and that the reason they die is not because of a divine decree, but because of their own willful choice to reject His gracious plea.

**Scripture References:** Ezekiel 33:11, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Luke 19:41-42

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The standard **rebuttal** is the "two wills" of God theory. The argument is that God's "preceptive will" (His revealed commands and desires) is that the wicked should turn and live, and He takes no pleasure in their death according to this will. However, His "decretive will" (His secret, eternal plan) has ordained their death for His own glory, and in this sense, He does take pleasure in the execution of His plan. This sophisticated philosophical device, however, is not explicitly found in Scripture. It is a construct designed to resolve a contradiction created by the system itself. It saves the system but does so by creating a God with two contradictory wills, a picture that is foreign to the unified, integrated character of the God of the Bible.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This is a profound point of tension within **Calvinism**. The system developed by **John Calvin**, which emphasizes God's meticulous decree over all things, must find a way to reconcile this with the clear statements of God's universal, benevolent desires. The "two wills" theory became the standard explanation within **Reformed and Presbyterian** theology. This was a major point of contention for **Jacobus Arminius** and **John Wesley**, who argued that such a distinction made God seem duplicitous. They insisted that God's revealed will is His true will, and that He genuinely desires the salvation of all.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:18, Romans 9:22, Proverbs 16:4

**Verses of Correction:** Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Ezekiel 18:23, Matthew 23:37

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "two wills" argument is a classic example of the **Equivocation** fallacy. It uses the key word "will" in two different and contradictory senses within the same argument, in order to resolve a paradox. It speaks of God's "will" of desire and His "will" of decree as if they were the same category, when in fact the system sets them in opposition to each other. By equivocating on the term "will," the argument can create the illusion of a solution, while in reality, it has simply created a God who simultaneously wills and does not will the same outcome. It's a verbal shell game that obscures rather than clarifies.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's pleasure in purely utilitarian terms**. This philosophical bias assumes that God's ultimate "pleasure" is the successful execution of His eternal, deterministic plan, whatever that may be. It detaches His pleasure from His inherent moral character. The Bible, however, presents God's pleasure as being rooted in His nature. He takes pleasure in righteousness, mercy, and life because He *is* righteous, merciful, and living. He takes no pleasure in wickedness and death because they are contrary to His very being. The "two wills" theory requires a God whose ultimate pleasure in His own decree can override His natural displeasure with sin and death.



**Question 60. How does the Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty compare with the biblical portrayal of God as a relational being who interacts with and responds to His creation?**

**Answer 60. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty, particularly in its more rigid forms, presents a God who is a meticulous, all-determining micromanager of the universe. This stands in stark contrast to the biblical portrayal of God as a profoundly **relational, interactive, and responsive** being. The pages of Scripture are filled with the drama of a God who engages with His creation. He walks with Adam in the cool of the day. He reasons with Cain. He makes covenants with Noah and Abraham. He pleads with Israel through the prophets. He responds to the prayers of His people, sometimes even "repenting" or relenting from a threatened course of action (as with Nineveh). Jesus weeps over Jerusalem's rebellion. This is not the picture of a divine puppeteer pulling the strings of a predetermined script. This is the picture of a King and a Father who has sovereignly chosen to enter into a real, dynamic, and often messy relationship with the creatures He has made in His own image. The deterministic view of sovereignty, borrowed more from Greek philosophy than the Hebrew scriptures, tends to flatten this rich, relational narrative into a sterile, philosophical monologue, sacrificing the personal God of the Bible for a more logically tidy, but less biblical, Prime Mover.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 3:8-9, Genesis 4:6-7, Genesis 18:17-33, Exodus 32:14, Jonah 3:10, Jeremiah 18:7-10, Luke 19:41, James 5:16

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the instances of God "repenting" or responding to prayer are anthropomorphisms—human ways of speaking about God that are not meant to be taken literally as a change in His eternal, unchangeable plan. The argument is that God has decreed both the prayer and His response to it from eternity. While it is true that God's eternal nature does not change, this explanation can drain the reality from the biblical encounters. It suggests that Abraham's intercession for Sodom or Moses' plea for Israel were not genuine interactions that influenced the outcome, but merely a divinely scripted performance. The Bible, however, presents these as real encounters with real stakes. To reduce them to mere anthropomorphisms is to risk losing the very relational heart of the biblical story.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The more rigid, deterministic view of sovereignty is a hallmark of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, emphasizes the impassibility and immutability of God in a way that can minimize the relational and responsive aspects of His character revealed in the biblical narrative. This has been a point of contention with other theological traditions. **Arminianism and Wesleyanism**, as well as the modern movement of **Open Theism**, place a much stronger emphasis on the relational and responsive nature of God, arguing that the deterministic model is a product of Greek philosophical influence (particularly Neoplatonism) on Christian theology.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Malachi 3:6 ("I am the LORD, I change not"), Numbers 23:19, James 1:17, Isaiah 46:10

**Verses of Correction:** Genesis 18:23-32, Exodus 32:14, Jonah 3:10, Jeremiah 26:19, Amos 7:3-6

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that all of God's responsive actions are mere anthropomorphisms can become a form of the **Special Pleading** fallacy. It creates a special rule of interpretation for any passage that threatens the system. The rule is: "Any text that portrays God as changing His mind or responding to human action must be interpreted non-literally as an anthropomorphism. Any text that portrays Him as unchanging must be interpreted literally." This inconsistent hermeneutic allows the system to dismiss a large body of inconvenient biblical data by placing it in a special, non-literal category. It's a method of protecting a belief by refusing to apply the same interpretive standards to all the evidence.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption, borrowed from **classical Greek philosophy (particularly Plato and Aristotle)**, that **perfection requires immutability and impassibility**. In this philosophical framework, a perfect being cannot change or be affected by anything outside of itself. This idea was imported into Christian theology by early thinkers like Augustine. The God of the Hebrew Bible, however, is not the "unmoved mover" of Aristotle. He is a living, personal, and passionate God who enters into the messiness of human history and allows Himself to be affected by the relationship He has with His people. The philosophical error is to impose this Greek ideal of static perfection onto the dynamic, relational God of the Bible.

## Historical and Textual Considerations

**Question 61. Is the TULIP framework a direct summary of biblical teaching, or is it a later theological construct developed by the followers of John Calvin?**

**Answer 61. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The TULIP acronym (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints) is not a direct summary of biblical teaching that emerges from a plain reading of Scripture. It is a **later theological construct**, a highly systematic and philosophical framework that was not created by John Calvin himself, but was developed after his death to summarize the key judgments of the **Synod of Dort** in 1618-1619. This synod was a political and theological council convened specifically to refute the five points of the Remonstrants (the followers of Jacobus Arminius). The TULIP acronym, therefore, is a reactionary and polemical device. It represents a deductive approach to theology: it starts with a core philosophical premise about God's meticulous sovereignty and then arranges select biblical data to fit that logical structure. An inductive, topical Bible study, where one gathers all the verses on a subject and allows the doctrine to emerge from the harmonized whole, would not produce this neat, five-point system. It is a product of post-Reformation scholasticism, not a direct summary of the apostolic faith.

**Scripture References:** (The TULIP system is a construct, so there are no verses that list it. It is built by synthesizing verses that are believed to support each point.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that while the acronym itself is a later invention, the doctrines it represents are thoroughly biblical and were taught by Jesus, the apostles, and church fathers like Augustine long before the Synod of Dort. This argument contains a partial truth. The Bible certainly speaks about depravity, election, atonement, grace, and perseverance. The issue is not the topics themselves, but the specific, systematic, and extreme formulation of

those topics found in TULIP. For example, the Bible teaches depravity, but not necessarily the "Total Inability" of the 'T'. It teaches election, but not necessarily the "Unconditional" election of the 'U'. The TULIP framework takes each of these biblical topics and pushes them to their most deterministic, philosophical extreme, creating a system that is more rigid and less balanced than the biblical presentation itself.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The TULIP acronym is the most famous summary of the soteriology of **Calvinism**. It is the defining framework for **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches worldwide. Its formulation at the **Synod of Dort (1619)** was a watershed moment in Protestant history, solidifying the division between the Calvinistic and Arminian branches of the Reformation. While **John Calvin's Institutes** (1536) laid the essential groundwork for all five points, the acronym itself is a later, more rigid codification of his thought, designed for the specific purpose of theological combat.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Each point has its own set of proof texts, which are often the same verses listed as "Apparent Support" in the previous answers for each topic.)

**Verses of Correction:** (A full topical study of each of the five points, gathering all relevant verses, provides the correction to the imbalanced TULIP formulation.)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The TULIP framework itself is an example of the **Fallacy of Oversimplification** (also known as the causal reductionism). It takes the rich, complex, and often paradoxical biblical teachings on salvation and reduces them to five neat, logically interconnected points. This process inevitably smooths over textual difficulties, ignores counter-evidence, and forces the sprawling, organic testimony of Scripture into a tidy, man-made box. It sacrifices comprehensive biblical fidelity for the sake of systematic coherence. It's like trying to summarize a great, epic novel with a five-sentence plot summary; you might capture the main idea, but you lose all the nuance, character development, and richness of the original story.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that the truths of God must be containable within a logically coherent and non-contradictory human system. This philosophical impulse, which gained great traction during the period of Protestant Scholasticism, seeks to create a "systematic theology" that is as logically rigorous as a work of philosophy. The TULIP framework is a product of this rationalistic desire. The Bible, however, is not a systematic theology textbook. It is a collection of diverse, inspired texts that reveal truth through narrative, poetry, prophecy, and paradox. The attempt to force this rich, multi-textured revelation into a rigid, rationalistic system will always do violence to the text.

**Question 62. How did the early church fathers before Augustine understand the doctrines of free will, election, and grace?**

**Answer 62. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The overwhelming and consistent testimony of the early church fathers before Augustine of Hippo (who wrote in the late 4th and early 5th centuries) was a firm belief in the **freedom of the human will** to respond to God's grace. The deterministic doctrines that would later form the basis of Calvinism were almost entirely absent



from the first three centuries of Christian thought. Early fathers like **Justin Martyr** (c. 160 AD), **Irenaeus** (c. 180 AD), **Tertullian** (c. 200 AD), and **Origen** (c. 230 AD) consistently taught that human beings are responsible moral agents who possess the ability to choose or reject the gospel. They understood election to be based on God's **foreknowledge** of who would believe. They saw grace not as an irresistible, coercive force, but as a divine assistance, a persuasive and enabling power that works with the human will. The idea of an inherited guilt from Adam that destroys the will's freedom, and an unconditional, individual predestination to salvation or damnation, were not part of the apostolic faith as understood by the early church. Augustine's later theological shift represented a significant and controversial departure from this ancient consensus.

**Scripture References:** (The teachings of the church fathers are historical data, not scripture. They based their views on the same scriptures debated today, such as Deuteronomy 30:19, John 3:16, and Romans 9.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the early fathers were not as theologically precise as the later Reformers and that their views on free will were tainted by Greek philosophy. It is argued that Augustine, through a deeper study of Paul, corrected the errors of his predecessors. This argument is a form of chronological snobbery. While the fathers did engage with philosophy, their emphasis on free will was primarily a reaction against the fatalism of Gnosticism and Stoicism, which they saw as unbiblical. Another **rebuttal** is to "cherry-pick" isolated quotes from the fathers that seem to hint at a stronger view of sovereignty, while ignoring the vast body of their work that clearly affirms free will. A fair reading of the historical record shows a clear and dominant belief in human freedom and responsibility in the pre-Augustinian church.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The historical record of the early church fathers presents a significant challenge to the claims of **Calvinism** that its doctrines represent the original, apostolic faith. **Reformed and Presbyterian** theologians must argue that the true faith was essentially lost or corrupted until it was recovered by **Augustine** in the 5th century and then fully restored by **John Calvin** in the 16th. This view of church history is necessary to sustain the system. The historical evidence is so strong that it has led many scholars to conclude that Augustine's deterministic views were an innovation, heavily influenced by his background in Manichean and Neoplatonic philosophy, and his intense polemical battle with the Pelagians.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Historical argument, not based on specific verses.)

**Verses of Correction:** (Historical argument, not based on specific verses.)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the early fathers were theologically imprecise and that Augustine "corrected" them commits the **Appeal to Progress** fallacy (a form of chronological snobbery). This fallacy assumes that later ideas are inherently better or more correct simply because they are later. It dismisses the views of the early church, who were closer in time, language, and culture to the apostles, in favor of a theological system developed centuries later in a completely different context. It's like arguing that a modern commentary on Shakespeare is inherently more accurate than the notes of an actor who worked with Shakespeare himself, simply because the commentary is more recent and "systematic."

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **theological development is always a linear progression toward greater truth**. This is a modern, evolutionary view of history applied to doctrine. It fails to consider the biblical and historical reality of apostasy and doctrinal drift. The Bible warns that the church will be infiltrated by false teachings and that there will be a "falling away." It is entirely possible, and historically demonstrable, that later theological developments can be a corruption of, rather than an improvement upon, the original faith. The proximity of the early fathers to the apostolic age gives their testimony a weight that cannot be easily dismissed by an appeal to later, more "developed" systems.

**Question 63. What is the "cherry-picking fallacy," and how might it apply to the way different theological systems use Scripture?**

**Answer 63. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "cherry-picking fallacy," also known as the fallacy of incomplete evidence or suppressed evidence, is the act of selecting and presenting only the data that supports one's own position, while intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the body of evidence that might contradict it. This is one of the most common and deceptive errors in the construction of theological systems. The Bible is a large and complex book, and it is possible to build a seemingly coherent case for almost any doctrine by carefully selecting a handful of verses that appear to support it, while systematically ignoring or explaining away the verses that challenge it. For example, a theological system like Calvinism is built by **cherry-picking** the verses that emphasize God's sovereignty, predestination, and election (like Romans 9 and John 6). It then treats these as the controlling texts and forces all other verses—those that speak of God's universal love, man's free will, and the conditional nature of salvation—to be reinterpreted in light of the pre-selected "key" texts. A true, honest topical Bible study does the opposite. It demands that **all the cherries be picked**, that every relevant verse on a subject be brought to the table and harmonized, allowing the full counsel of God, not a biased selection, to determine the final doctrine.

**Scripture References:** Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, 2 Timothy 2:15, Acts 20:27, Revelation 22:18-19

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to deny that any cherry-picking is taking place. Proponents of a system will argue that they *do* consider all the verses, but that the verses that seem to contradict their system are simply being "interpreted correctly" in light of the clearer, more foundational texts. This argument, however, begs the question. Who decides which texts are "clearer" and more "foundational"? Invariably, the texts chosen as the interpretive key are the very ones that support the preconceived system. It is a circular method that uses the system to interpret the Bible, rather than using the Bible to build the system. A truly foundational text should be one that is simple, direct, and less open to interpretation, not one that is complex and highly debated (like Romans 9).

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** Virtually every rigid theological system is guilty of the cherry-picking fallacy to some degree, as the very nature of a "system" is to organize data around a central, controlling principle. This is particularly evident in **Calvinism**, which elevates the doctrine of meticulous sovereignty to be the interpretive grid for the entire Bible. It is also seen in **Seventh-**

**day Adventism**, which elevates the Sabbath and the teachings of Ellen White as the key to understanding Scripture. It is seen in **Roman Catholicism**, which elevates church tradition to the same level as Scripture, allowing it to select which interpretation is correct. The only antidote to this fallacy is a radical commitment to a topical study method that honors every verse and refuses to build a doctrine until all the evidence has been honestly weighed.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (This is a fallacy of method, not of a specific doctrine.)

**Verses of Correction:** (These verses command a full and honest handling of God's Word.) Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 2:15, Deuteronomy 4:2

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The cherry-picking fallacy is a straightforward **Fallacy of Suppressed Evidence**. It is the act of intentionally failing to use information that is relevant to the conclusion. It is a sin of omission. It's like a real estate agent who tells you about the beautiful new kitchen and the spacious backyard of a house, but "forgets" to mention the black mold in the basement and the cracked foundation. The information he gives you is true, but because he has suppressed the contradictory evidence, the conclusion you draw (that this is a great house to buy) is false. This is precisely how systematic theology often works.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **deductive reasoning**, as opposed to inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning starts with a general principle or premise and then reasons down to specific conclusions. Inductive reasoning starts with specific pieces of evidence and then reasons up to a general principle. Theological systems are often built deductively. They start with a philosophical premise (e.g., "God is meticulously sovereign") and then deduce what must be true about election, atonement, etc. A topical Bible study is inductive. It starts with the specific evidence (all the verses on a topic) and allows the general principle (the doctrine) to emerge from the evidence. The deductive method is prone to the cherry-picking fallacy because it will naturally favor the evidence that fits its starting premise.

**Question 64. How does the doctrine of the Book of Life, as presented throughout the Bible, challenge the foundational tenets of Calvinism?**

**Answer 64. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life stands as a powerful, self-contained refutation of the foundational tenets of Calvinism, particularly Unconditional Election and the Perseverance of the Saints. The architectural design of this doctrine is not about names being added, but about the terrifying possibility of names being **blotted out**. This is the key that unlocks the entire structure. God Himself declares this principle to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:33). The promise of Christ to the overcomer in Revelation 3:5 is not that their name will be written, but that He will **not blot out** their name. This implies that the names are already there, and the danger is removal. This leads to a biblically harmonious model that Calvinism cannot accommodate: God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote every name in His book from the beginning. This affirms a universal, gracious provision. However, a person's place is conditional upon a living, persevering faith. Through final, unrepentant sin, that place can be forfeited. This doctrine single-handedly



demolishes the 'U' and the 'P' of TULIP, replacing a rigid, deterministic system with a dynamic, relational one that perfectly upholds both God's sovereign grace and man's solemn responsibility.

**Scripture References:** Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to create a distinction between the "Book of Life" (a temporary register of all living people or covenant members) and the "Lamb's Book of Life" (an eternal, unchangeable list of the elect). They argue that names can be blotted out of the former, but not the latter. This distinction, however, is an artificial construct not found in Scripture. The Bible uses the terms interchangeably and connects being in "the book" directly with eternal salvation (Daniel 12:1, Revelation 21:27). Another **rebuttal** is that the warnings are hypothetical, meant only to motivate the elect who could never actually be blotted out. This turns God's solemn warnings into a form of insincere motivation and does violence to the plain meaning of the text.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrines of Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints are central to **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, requires the list of the saved to be eternally fixed. Therefore, the clear biblical evidence that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life presents a severe theological problem that must be neutralized through complex, extra-biblical explanations like the "two books" theory. This contrasts with the view of many **Anabaptists and Arminians**, who have long seen the doctrine of the Book of Life as a clear biblical support for conditional security.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:28-29, Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6

**Verses of Correction:** Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28, Hebrews 6:4-6

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "two books" theory is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("the list of the saved is unchangeable") is falsified by the clear evidence that names can be blotted out of "the book." To save the original belief, a new, unsupported element is invented: a second, different book from which names *cannot* be blotted out. This new element is introduced "for this" specific purpose—to rescue the theory. It is a desperate maneuver that has no basis in the biblical text itself, but is required to protect the man-made system.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's plan in terms of a static, unchangeable list rather than a living, covenantal record**. This is a preference for a bureaucratic, administrative model of salvation. A list is fixed; a record is updated. The Bible presents the Book of Life as a living document that reflects the current standing of individuals in their covenant relationship with God. The philosophical error is to impose a static, fatalistic concept (an unchangeable list) onto a dynamic, relational one (a covenantal record).

**Question 65. What is the significance of the fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel?**

**Answer 65. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The fact that the term "elect" or "chosen" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the **corporate, covenantal nation of Israel** is of monumental significance. It means that the primary architectural pillars used to construct the Calvinistic doctrine of individual, unconditional election are being removed from their proper foundation. When Jesus speaks of shortening the days of tribulation for the "elect's sake" (Matthew 24:22), the context is undeniably the Jewish people in Judea. When Paul agonizes over his "kinsmen according to the flesh" in Romans 9, his entire argument about election (Jacob vs. Esau, etc.) is framed by the question of Israel's status as God's chosen people. To ignore this primary, national, and historical context and to instead read a later, philosophical definition of "individual predestination to salvation" back into these texts is a profound act of interpretive violence. It atomizes a corporate concept and dehistoricizes a covenantal one. The New Testament's great revelation is not that God has a secret list of elect individuals, but that the "elect" people of God has now been expanded through Christ to include both Jews and Gentiles who believe.

**Scripture References:** Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22-31, Romans 9:1-13, Romans 11:1-2, Romans 11:28, 1 Peter 2:9

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to concede the national context but to argue that God's dealings with national Israel reveal the *principles* by which He deals with individuals. The argument is that the sovereign way He chose the nation is the same sovereign way He chooses individuals for salvation. This is a leap of logic that assumes a uniform methodology in all of God's actions. God's choice of a nation for a specific historical purpose (to bring forth the Messiah) is a different category of action than His offer of salvation to all individuals. Furthermore, the election of national Israel was clearly not an unconditional election to salvation for every individual within it, as the vast majority were ultimately "broken off" through unbelief. The analogy, if followed consistently, would actually support conditional election for individuals.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The failure to recognize the primary referent of "elect" as national Israel is a foundational error of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, requires these key texts in Romans 9 and elsewhere to be about individual, metaphysical predestination. This interpretation is necessary to support the 'U' (Unconditional Election) in TULIP. By decontextualizing the term, the system can build its case on what appear to be strong proof texts. However, once the original historical and covenantal context is restored, these pillars are shown to be resting on sand.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 8:33, Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1

**Verses of Correction:** Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22, Romans 9:1-5, Romans 11:28, 1 Peter 2:9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The misapplication of the term "elect" is a clear example of the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It involves isolating a word or phrase from its surrounding context in order to impose a different meaning upon it. By lifting the word "elect" out

of its specific, historical context of God's dealings with the nation of Israel and placing it into an abstract, systematic context of individual soteriology, the meaning is fundamentally altered. It's like taking the phrase "one giant leap for mankind" out of the context of the moon landing and using it to argue that all humans should take up long jumping.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges abstract, timeless principles over concrete, historical events**. This is a philosophical bias, often inherited from Greek thought (like Plato's theory of forms), that seeks the universal, unchanging idea behind the particular, historical manifestation. The Calvinistic system does this with election. It seeks an abstract, eternal principle of "individual election" and sees God's historical election of Israel as merely one example of this timeless principle. The Bible, however, is a profoundly historical book. Its doctrines are revealed through God's concrete acts in time and space. The historical election of Israel is not an example of a principle; it is the primary story from which our understanding of election must be derived.

**Question 66. How does a pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books affect our understanding of prophecies related to Israel and the "end times"?**

**Answer 66. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A pre-70 AD dating for the majority of the New Testament books—a view held by a growing number of conservative scholars—radically reorients our understanding of "end times" prophecy. It anchors the dramatic, apocalyptic language of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and much of the book of Revelation to a specific, imminent, historical event: the catastrophic end of the Old Covenant age, which culminated in the **destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans in 70 AD**. When Jesus speaks of "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," He is referring to the generation of His contemporaries. The "coming of the Son of man" in judgment, the "great tribulation," and the "abomination of desolation" are understood as powerful, prophetic descriptions of this covenant-ending judgment upon national Israel. This perspective, often called Preterism, does not necessarily deny a future, final Second Coming, but it recognizes that many prophecies that have been projected into our distant future had a profound and devastating fulfillment for the apostles' original audience. It shifts the focus from speculative newspaper eschatology to the immense theological significance of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 24:1-34, Mark 13:1-30, Luke 21:5-32, Daniel 9:26-27, 1 Peter 4:7 ("the end of all things is at hand"), Hebrews 8:13 ("he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away")

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** comes from Futurists, who insist that the language of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation is too cosmic and global to refer to a local event in Judea. They will point to phrases like the sun being darkened, the stars falling from heaven, and the Son of man coming on the clouds. This **rebuttal**, however, fails to appreciate the nature of biblical, apocalyptic language. The Old Testament prophets frequently used this same kind of cosmic, de-creation language to describe the historical judgments upon nations like Babylon, Egypt, and Edom (e.g., Isaiah 13:10). It is symbolic language used to convey the theological significance of a world-



shaking historical event, not a literal, meteorological report. The "coming" of the Lord in judgment is a common theme that does not always refer to the final, physical Second Coming.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The dominant view in modern American evangelicalism is **Dispensational Futurism**, which projects nearly all of these prophecies into a future seven-year tribulation period. This system was popularized in the 19th century by **John Nelson Darby** and later through the **Scofield Reference Bible** (1909). This view is central to the theology of many **Baptist, Pentecostal, and non-denominational** churches. A pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament provides a significant challenge to this system, suggesting that its elaborate charts and timelines are based on a misinterpretation of prophecies that were fulfilled nearly 2,000 years ago. The Preterist view, while less popular, has deep historical roots and has been held by many theologians throughout church history.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For a future fulfillment) Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 1:7 ("every eye shall see him")

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 24:34 ("This generation shall not pass..."), Matthew 10:23, Matthew 16:28, Hebrews 8:13, 1 Peter 4:7

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The Futurist interpretation of these prophecies often commits the **Fallacy of Anachronism**. This fallacy occurs when an idea or concept from a later time period is read back into a historical text. Modern readers, accustomed to scientific literalism and global consciousness, read the cosmic language of the Olivet Discourse and assume it must refer to the literal end of the physical planet. They are reading their modern, post-Enlightenment worldview back into a 1st-century Jewish apocalyptic text. The original audience would have understood this symbolic, covenantal language in the context of the Old Testament prophets, recognizing it as a powerful description of a local, yet theologically world-ending, divine judgment.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **wooden literalism** in the interpretation of prophetic and apocalyptic genres. This philosophical approach to hermeneutics fails to recognize that different types of literature in the Bible have different rules of interpretation. It attempts to read poetry and apocalyptic symbolism with the same literalness as historical narrative or legal codes. The Bible is not a flat book. Apocalyptic literature, in particular, is highly symbolic and uses cosmic imagery to convey theological truth about historical events. To read it as a literal, scientific description of future astronomical events is to fundamentally misunderstand the genre and to miss the author's original intent.

**Question 67. Are the defining doctrines of Calvinism discoverable by a plain reading of the Bible, or do they require a specific philosophical and theological framework?**

**Answer 67. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The defining doctrines of Calvinism, particularly the more controversial and philosophically complex tenets of TULIP, are not readily discoverable by a plain, inductive reading of the Bible. A person given a Bible for the first time, with no prior theological training, would be highly unlikely to conclude that Christ's death was only for a select few, or that God's grace is an irresistible force. They would naturally read the

"whosoever" passages as universal, the warnings against apostasy as real, and the commands to choose as genuine. The Calvinistic system requires a **specific philosophical and theological framework** to be brought to the text. It is a product of deductive reasoning, which starts with a central premise—the meticulous, deterministic sovereignty of God—and then interprets all of Scripture through that lens. The doctrines are the logical entailments of the starting premise, not the natural conclusions of a comprehensive, topical study. The very fact that the system requires extensive explanation, the redefinition of common words like "all" and "world," and complex theories like the "two wills" of God, is itself evidence that it is not the plain teaching of Scripture.

**Scripture References:** (This is an argument about hermeneutics and methodology, not a specific doctrine.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the "plain reading" of the non-Calvinist is a superficial reading that fails to grapple with the "deeper" truths of passages like Romans 9. It is argued that the Calvinistic framework is not imposed upon the text, but is the result of a more profound and theologically astute exegesis. This argument, however, often equates "deeper" with "more philosophically complex." It also assumes that the most difficult and debated passages (like Romans 9) should be the interpretive key for the rest of the Bible, rather than allowing the simple and clear passages to interpret the difficult ones. The biblical principle of clarity (perspicuity) suggests that the central truths of the faith should be accessible to the plain reader, not hidden in complex theological formulations.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The need for a specific interpretive framework is a characteristic of highly systematic theologies. **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** is a prime example. The system, as developed by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, is deeply philosophical and requires a significant amount of theological education to defend. This is also true of other complex systems like **Roman Catholicism** (with its synthesis of Scripture, tradition, and Aristotelian philosophy) and **Dispensationalism** (with its intricate charts and dispensational grids). These systems stand in contrast to the simpler, more narrative and less philosophical approach of the **Anabaptist** tradition, which has historically emphasized a more straightforward, literal reading of the teachings of Jesus.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Methodological argument)

**Verses of Correction:** (Methodological argument)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the Calvinistic reading is a "deeper" reading often commits the **Appeal to Complexity** fallacy. This fallacy assumes that a more complex or difficult-to-understand explanation is more likely to be true. It can be a form of intellectual intimidation, where a position is defended on the grounds that its opponents are simply not intelligent or educated enough to grasp its profound depths. This is often a smokescreen for a lack of clear, simple, biblical evidence. The truth of the gospel is profound, but it is also presented as a simple message that even a child can understand. A system that requires a theological degree to defend should be viewed with suspicion.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that God's truth can and must be organized into a comprehensive, logically coherent, and non-contradictory human system. This is the driving impulse behind all systematic theology. The goal is to create a perfect, seamless intellectual structure. The Bible, however, is not a book of systematic philosophy. It is a library of inspired texts that reveal God's truth through various genres, often holding profound truths in paradoxical tension. The rationalist impulse seeks to resolve these tensions and eliminate the paradoxes, but in doing so, it often smooths over and distorts the very texture of the biblical revelation itself.

**Question 68. How have different Bible translations, based on different manuscript traditions (e.g., Textus Receptus vs. Alexandrian), influenced the interpretation of key verses related to Calvinism?**

**Answer 68. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** While the major theological debates between Calvinism and Arminianism can be argued from any mainstream Bible translation, the differences between the underlying manuscript traditions do have a subtle but significant influence on the interpretation of key verses. The King James Version is based on the **Textus Receptus** (Received Text), which represents the vast majority of existing Greek manuscripts (the Byzantine text-type). Most modern translations (NIV, ESV, NASB, etc.) are based on the **Alexandrian text-type**, which relies on a few, very old manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. There are thousands of differences between these two text traditions. In some cases, the Alexandrian text omits words, phrases, or even entire verses that are present in the Textus Receptus. While many of these are minor, some can affect theological nuance. For example, some scholars argue that the Alexandrian readings can sometimes weaken the emphasis on human response, the universality of the atonement, or the deity of Christ, thereby making the textual base slightly more favorable to a deterministic or Arian-leaning interpretation. The KJV, based on the Majority Text, often presents a reading that is more robustly supportive of traditional, orthodox theology.

**Scripture References:** (This is an argument about textual criticism, not a specific doctrine. Examples of variant readings would be cited, e.g., the omission of the end of Mark 16 or the Comma Johanneum in 1 John 5:7 in modern versions.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from modern textual critics is that the Alexandrian manuscripts, while fewer in number, are much older and therefore more likely to be closer to the original autographs. The Byzantine text, they argue, was subject to scribal additions and harmonization over the centuries. This is the central debate in New Testament textual criticism. The counter-argument is that the sheer number and geographical spread of the Byzantine manuscripts suggest they represent the authentic text, and that the Alexandrian manuscripts represent a localized, and sometimes corrupted, text-type from Egypt. The debate is complex, but it is a fact that the textual basis for the KJV is different from that of most modern versions, and this difference can have interpretive implications.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This is not an issue of a specific church teaching a fallacy, but of the academic and publishing consensus that has shaped the Bibles used in most churches today. The shift from the Textus Receptus to the Alexandrian-based Critical Text was driven by the work



of 19th-century scholars like **Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort** (1881). Their theories revolutionized textual criticism and led to the creation of the modern Greek New Testaments that are used by virtually all modern translation committees. This academic consensus is now the standard in almost all **evangelical seminaries and universities**. The **King James Only** movement, found in some **fundamentalist Baptist** circles, is a reactionary response to this shift, though it often relies on poor arguments and a lack of genuine textual scholarship.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Textual argument)

**Verses of Correction:** (Textual argument)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "older is always better" when it comes to manuscripts can be a form of the **Appeal to Antiquity** fallacy. While age is an important factor, it is not the only one. A very old manuscript could be a very bad and careless copy, while a later manuscript could be a very careful copy of a much older, now-lost exemplar. Textual criticism involves weighing multiple lines of evidence, including the age, geographical distribution, and internal characteristics of the manuscripts. To base one's entire textual theory on the age of a few manuscripts, while ignoring the overwhelming testimony of the majority, is a methodological oversimplification.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **positivism**, a philosophical approach that places a high value on empirical, "scientific" evidence and is often skeptical of tradition. The Westcott-Hort theory was a product of the 19th-century positivist mindset. It sought to apply "scientific principles" to the biblical text, and it was deeply skeptical of the traditional text that the church had used for centuries. It favored a few "hard," old pieces of evidence (the Alexandrian codices) over the "soft," traditional evidence of the majority of manuscripts. This approach, while appearing objective, can carry its own set of biases and can fail to appreciate the value of a textual tradition that has been preserved and validated by the life of the church over many centuries.

**Question 69. What role did the philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism play in the development of Augustine's theology?**

**Answer 69. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The philosophical systems of Manichaeism and Stoicism played a profound and demonstrable role in the development of Augustine's later, deterministic theology. Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine spent nine years as a Manichaean. **Manichaeism** was a dualistic, Gnostic religion that taught a form of absolute fatalism. It believed that humanity was divided into a fixed number of "elect" who had particles of light within them and were destined for salvation, and the "damned" who were made of darkness and were destined for destruction. The parallels to Augustine's later doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation are striking and cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Furthermore, the intellectual air of the late Roman Empire was saturated with **Stoicism**, a philosophy that taught that all events are determined by a divine, rational principle (the Logos) or fate. Recent scholarship has shown that Augustine's arguments for determinism, and even his specific terminology, often mirror those of the Stoic philosophers. It appears that Augustine, in his fierce battle against the Pelagians (who overemphasized free will), reached back into the

philosophical arsenal of his pre-Christian past and "baptized" these pagan, fatalistic concepts into his Christian theology, creating a novel system that was a significant departure from the free-will consensus of the first three centuries of the church.

**Scripture References:** (This is a historical argument, not a doctrinal one derived from specific verses.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that these parallels are superficial and that Augustine's doctrines were derived purely from his exegesis of Scripture, particularly the writings of the Apostle Paul. Proponents will claim that Augustine was simply the first to fully understand the "deep" truths of Romans 9. This argument, however, fails to account for the dramatic shift in theology that Augustine represents. Why did no one in the first three centuries see these "deep truths"? And why do Augustine's "biblical" arguments bear such an uncanny resemblance, both in structure and in content, to the pagan philosophical systems with which he was intimately familiar? To dismiss this strong historical and textual evidence as coincidence is an act of historical denialism designed to protect a theological tradition.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** Augustine of Hippo's deterministic theology became the foundation for virtually all of Western theology that followed, including both **Roman Catholicism** and the Protestant Reformation. **John Calvin** (1536) and **Martin Luther** were both deeply Augustinian in their soteriology. Therefore, the philosophical DNA of Manichaeism and Stoic fatalism is embedded within the theological systems of **Lutheran, Reformed, and Presbyterian** churches. The historical research on this topic, particularly the recent, definitive work by scholars like Ken Wilson, presents a profound challenge to the claim that these doctrines are purely biblical in origin.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Historical argument)

**Verses of Correction:** (Historical argument)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that Augustine's views were derived purely from the Bible, despite the strong philosophical parallels, commits the **Confirmation Bias** fallacy. Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's preexisting beliefs. Defenders of the Augustinian tradition start with the belief that their doctrines are biblical. When they look at Augustine, they are predisposed to see only the biblical influences and to minimize or dismiss the clear philosophical parallels. They are not weighing all the historical evidence objectively, but are selectively focusing on the evidence that confirms what they already believe to be true.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **theology can be developed in a philosophical vacuum**. This is a naive view of history and intellectual development. No theologian, not even one as brilliant as Augustine, thinks or writes in a vacuum. They are all products of their time, their education, and their intellectual environment. To deny the profound influence of Manichaeism and Stoicism on Augustine's thought is to deny the very nature of how ideas are formed and transmitted. The

historical evidence is clear that Augustine did not simply read his Bible; he read his Bible through the philosophical lens that his life and education had provided him.

**Question 70. How does the message of John the Baptist to the nation of Israel serve as a refutation of the core principles of TULIP?**

**Answer 70. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The fiery, uncompromising message of John the Baptist serves as a concise and devastating, point-by-point refutation of the entire TULIP framework. First, he confronts the "elect" nation of Israel, warning them that their covenant status is not an unconditional guarantee of salvation. His threat that the fruitless tree will be "hewn down" is a direct assault on the doctrine of **Perseverance of the Saints** (the 'P') and, by implication, **Unconditional Election** (the 'U'). Second, his universal and urgent command to "repent ye" is addressed to all who came out to hear him. This command presupposes a will that is not in a state of **Total Inability** (the 'T') to respond. He does not tell them to wait for regeneration; he commands them to act. Third, his call to repentance is a genuine offer of reconciliation, which implies that a way of forgiveness has been provided for all who would repent. This stands against the idea of a **Limited Atonement** (the 'L') that was only for a select few. Finally, the very fact that his call could be, and was, rejected by the religious leaders shows that God's grace is not **Irresistible** (the 'I'). In the opening act of the New Testament drama, John the Baptist lays the axe to the root of the very theological tree that would later be known as Calvinism.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that John's message was part of the "dispensation of the Law" and that his warnings do not apply to the New Covenant believer. This argument, however, is an artificial division. John is the transitional figure, the bridge between the Old and New Covenants. His message is the preparatory message for the gospel of grace. To dismiss his warnings as belonging to a bygone era is to ignore the continuity of God's principles of judgment. Another **rebuttal** is the standard "No True Scotsman" argument: that the people John was warning were not the "true" elect within Israel, but only false professors. As previously discussed, this is an argument from silence that redefines the subjects of the warning to protect the system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The full force of John the Baptist's message is often blunted in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. His sermon must be interpreted in a way that does not violate the five points of the system. Therefore, his warnings are typically applied only to the "non-elect" within the visible covenant community. This contrasts with the **Anabaptist** and **Arminian** traditions, which have long seen John's sermon as a powerful affirmation of the need for a personal, fruit-bearing faith and a clear warning of the possibility of apostasy, even for those within the covenant people of God.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Systemic argument, not based on specific verses to rebut John's message.)

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 3:7-10, Luke 3:8-9



**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that John's warnings don't apply to the "true elect" commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The clear goalpost set by John is that any "tree" (any child of Abraham) that does not bear good fruit will be cut down. When this threatens the doctrine of perseverance, the goalpost is moved. The new argument is that the warning only applies to trees that were never "truly" rooted in the first place. This changes the terms of the warning to make it compatible with the system. It avoids the plain force of the analogy, which is about the outcome of the tree, not its secret, invisible status.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges systematic theology over biblical theology**. Biblical theology seeks to understand the message of each part of the Bible in its own historical and covenantal context. Systematic theology seeks to organize the Bible's teachings into a single, logically coherent system. When the two conflict, the systematic theologian will often reinterpret the biblical text to make it fit the system. The message of John the Baptist, understood in its own context, is a powerful piece of biblical theology that challenges the later, philosophical constructs of the systematic theology known as Calvinism.

## **The Church and the Christian Life**

**Question 71. How does one's view of salvation (Calvinist vs. non-Calvinist) impact their approach to evangelism and missions?**

**Answer 71. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A person's underlying theology of salvation is the engine that drives their approach to evangelism and missions, profoundly impacting its urgency, its methodology, and its message. The Calvinistic framework, which holds that God has unconditionally elected a fixed number of people to be saved and will draw them irresistibly, logically leads to an approach where evangelism is seen as the God-ordained means to **gather the elect**. The ultimate outcome is already secure in God's decree. While this can produce a patient and confident missionary, it can also diminish the sense of desperate urgency. The non-Calvinist (or Arminian/Wesleyan) framework, in contrast, sees the eternal destiny of every soul as a genuine contingency, dependent on their response to the gospel. This view logically leads to a more **passionate and persuasive** approach to evangelism. The missionary is not simply discovering who is on the list; they are pleading with souls on the precipice of a lost eternity, believing their message and their prayers can genuinely influence the outcome. The message itself also shifts. The Calvinist may emphasize the sovereignty of God in salvation, while the non-Calvinist will almost certainly emphasize the "whosoever will" nature of the invitation and the solemn responsibility of the hearer to choose life.

**Scripture References:** Romans 10:1, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Colossians 1:28-29, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Jude 1:22-23

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is that their view provides the only real power for missions, because it rests on the certainty of God's sovereign plan, not the fickle will of man. They argue that if salvation ultimately depends on human choice, the missionary can have no real confidence of success. This argument, however, misunderstands the nature of biblical faith. Our confidence is not in the human will, but in the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel message

to convict and persuade the human will. Another **rebuttal** is that many of the great missionaries in history, like William Carey, were Calvinists. This is true, but it can be argued that they were great missionaries *in spite of* the logical implications of their system, often operating with a practical passion and universal offer that seemed more Arminian in its application than their formal theology would suggest.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This practical difference in evangelistic approach has been a major dividing line throughout modern church history. The **Calvinistic** tradition (**Reformed and Presbyterian**) has produced great theologians and scholars of missions. However, the great, sweeping revival and missionary movements, such as the First and Second Great Awakenings and the rise of modern Pentecostalism, have been almost exclusively driven by an **Arminian/Wesleyan** theology. Figures like **John Wesley** (18th century) and **Charles Finney** (19th century) built their entire evangelistic methodology on the premise that a direct appeal could be made to the human will to make a decision for Christ.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For Calvinistic missions) Acts 13:48, Acts 18:9-10, John 6:37

**Verses of Correction:** (For Arminian missions) 2 Corinthians 5:20, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Luke 14:23

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that Calvinism provides the only true confidence for missions can be seen as a **False Dilemma**. It presents only two options: either you have the absolute certainty of a deterministic decree, or you have the utter uncertainty of relying on the unaided human will. It ignores the biblical third option: a confident reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit to work through the faithful preaching of the Word to enable and persuade the human will. Our confidence is not in the decree or in the will, but in the power of the gospel itself.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption about **what constitutes meaningful action**. The deterministic framework can lead to a form of fatalism where human actions, while decreed, are not ultimately decisive. The biblical framework, however, operates on a principle of genuine contingency and instrumental causality. Our prayers and our preaching are the real, God-ordained instruments that He uses to bring about salvation. They are not just a performance of a pre-written script. The philosophical error is to remove the genuine instrumentality of the means of grace, which in turn diminishes the motivation to employ them with passion and urgency.

**Question 72. What is the biblical model for church government, and how does it compare to the hierarchical structures often found in denominational churches?**

**Answer 72. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical model for church government, as revealed in the New Testament, is characterized by its simplicity, its local autonomy, and its servant leadership. The local church is the highest court of authority; there is no scriptural basis for any denominational or hierarchical structure above it. Each local assembly was to be led by a **plurality of elders** (the word for "elder," "bishop/overseer," and "pastor/shepherd" are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to the same office). These men were to meet the high moral and spiritual qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Their role was to teach,

shepherd, and govern the local flock. They were assisted in the practical and benevolent work of the church by **deacons**, who also had to meet stringent qualifications. This simple, local, elder-led model stands in stark contrast to the complex, multi-layered, hierarchical structures of most modern denominations, with their popes, cardinals, archbishops, district superintendents, synods, and general assemblies. These corporate-style structures are not found in the biblical blueprint; they are later, man-made inventions that often mirror the political structures of the world rather than the humble, servant-leadership model of Christ and the apostles.

**Scripture References:** Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A primary **rebuttal** is to point to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as a model for a broader, hierarchical church authority. This interpretation, however, misunderstands the nature of the event. The Jerusalem Council was a unique, foundational event where the apostles and elders gathered to address a specific, critical doctrinal issue (the question of Gentile circumcision). It was not a standing, legislative body that issued regular decrees to all the churches. It was a case of the daughter churches (like Antioch) seeking the wisdom of the mother church (Jerusalem) where the original apostles resided. It does not provide a warrant for the permanent, extra-local hierarchies that developed centuries later.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** Virtually every major denominational structure is a departure from the simple, local model of the New Testament. **Roman Catholicism** has the most elaborate hierarchy, with the Pope at its head, a structure that developed over many centuries, with the papacy solidifying its power around the 5th and 6th centuries. **Anglicanism and Episcopalianism** have a similar episcopal structure of bishops and archbishops. **Presbyterianism**, developed by **John Calvin** in Geneva in the 16th century, has a more representative, court-like system of presbyteries and general assemblies. Even many **Baptist and Pentecostal** groups, while claiming local church autonomy, have developed powerful denominational conventions and councils that exert significant influence over the local churches.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Acts 15:1-31, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 (regarding collections for other churches)

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 14:23 ("ordained them elders in every church"), Titus 1:5 ("ordain elders in every city"), 1 Peter 5:2 ("Feed the flock of God which is among you")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for hierarchical church government often commits the **Fallacy of False Analogy**. It draws an analogy between the leadership structure of Old Testament Israel (with its priests, high priest, and Sanhedrin) or the modern corporate world, and the New Testament church. These are false analogies. The church is explicitly called a "body" and a "family," not a kingdom or a corporation. The principles of leadership that apply to a nation-state or a business are not the same as those that apply to the family of God, which is to be governed by love, humility, and servant leadership, not by top-down, hierarchical power.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **institutional complexity and centralized power are necessary for**



**the unity and success of a movement.** This is a worldly, political, and sociological assumption. The Bible, however, presents a radically different model. The unity of the early church was not based on an institutional hierarchy, but on a shared faith in the apostolic gospel and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Its success was not due to a centralized strategy, but to the organic, decentralized, Spirit-led witness of local bodies of believers. The philosophical error is to import the world's principles of power and organization into the church, which is meant to be a counter-cultural community operating on the principles of the kingdom of God.

**Question 73. According to the New Testament, what is the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church?**

**Answer 73. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** According to the clear and consistent pattern of the New Testament, the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church was for **benevolence and charity**, specifically the care of the poor and needy within the Christian community. The early church in Jerusalem practiced a radical form of sharing, where believers sold possessions to create a common fund so that "distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:35). The first major administrative crisis and the appointment of deacons was over the "daily ministration" to the Grecian widows (Acts 6). Paul's great collection among the Gentile churches was not for a building fund or for his own salary, but was a relief effort "for the **poor saints which are at Jerusalem**" (Romans 15:26). The collection was a "widow and orphan fund," a practical expression of love for the brethren. This biblical model stands as a stark rebuke to the modern practice where the vast majority of church budgets are consumed by institutional overhead—mortgages, utilities, staff salaries, and program budgets—while the ministry to the poor is often relegated to a small, secondary line item. The New Testament priority was people, not programs or property.

**Scripture References:** Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Galatians 2:10, 1 Timothy 5:3-16

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to cite verses like 1 Timothy 5:17-18 ("Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour... For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn") and 1 Corinthians 9:14 ("Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel") to argue for the legitimacy of paid, professional clergy. While these verses do establish the principle that those who labor in the gospel have a right to receive financial support, the context must be carefully observed. Paul is primarily speaking of traveling apostles and missionaries who have no other means of support. In the case of local elders, Paul himself set the opposite example by working with his own hands as a tentmaker so as not to be a burden to the church. The principle is that support is permissible, but the overwhelming practice and priority of the New Testament was for local elders to be self-supporting and for the church's funds to be directed to the poor.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The modern professionalized, salaried pastorate is the standard model in almost every denomination, including **Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and non-denominational** churches. This system, however, is a departure from the New Testament pattern. The shift toward a professional, clerical class and the building of dedicated church structures began in earnest in the 3rd and 4th centuries, particularly after the conversion of the

Emperor **Constantine** (c. 312 AD). This led to the development of a church system that mirrored the structure of the Roman state, with a professional, state-supported clergy. This was a major departure from the simple, self-supporting, benevolence-focused house churches of the apostolic era.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** 1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Galatians 6:6

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 20:33-35, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, Acts 4:34-35, Romans 15:26

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for the modern church budget model often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It equates the New Testament principle that a traveling missionary has a right to support with the modern practice of a full-time, salaried pastorate with benefits, a building mortgage, and extensive program budgets. These two things are not equivalent. The former is a simple provision for the needs of a minister on the road; the latter is a complex institutional and corporate structure. By treating them as the same, the argument uses the biblical support for the former to justify the latter, which has very little, if any, direct biblical precedent.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **the church is an institution that must be managed, rather than an organism that must be nurtured**. This is a corporate or sociological view of the church. In this model, the church needs a CEO (the senior pastor), a board of directors (the elders/deacons), a physical plant (the building), and a budget to run its programs. The Bible, however, presents the church as a family, a body, a flock. In this organic model, the leaders are shepherds, not executives, and the resources are for the care of the family members, not for the maintenance of the institution. The philosophical error is to impose a corporate model onto a community that was designed to be a family.

#### **Question 74. How should believers respond to those who teach a different gospel or a different view of salvation?**

**Answer 74. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The biblical response to those who teach a different gospel or a fundamentally different view of salvation is not one of dialogue, debate, or ecumenical compromise. The response commanded in Scripture is clear, decisive, and protective: it is **separation**. The Apostle Paul lays down the architectural foundation for this in Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed**." This is a solemn, judicial condemnation. He then gives the practical application in Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**." The Apostle John is even more explicit, forbidding believers from even giving a greeting to a false teacher, "lest ye be partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:10-11). This is not an unloving or arrogant response. It is an act of supreme love for Christ and His truth, and a necessary act of protection for the flock of God. The church is to be a pillar and ground of the truth, and that requires guarding the foundation from any who would seek to alter or destroy it.

**Scripture References:** Galatians 1:6-9, Romans 16:17-18, 2 John 1:9-11, Titus 3:10-11, 2 Timothy 3:5, 1 Timothy 6:3-5

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that this approach is unloving, intolerant, and judgmental. It is argued that we should seek "unity in diversity" and dialogue with those who have different views. This argument, however, confuses unity with doctrinal indifference. The Bible calls for unity based on a shared foundation of truth, not a unity that papers over fundamental disagreements about the gospel itself. To treat a teacher who denies the deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone as a "brother in Christ" is not love; it is a betrayal of Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that we should "win them over" through debate. But Paul instructs Titus that after a first and second admonition, a heretic is to be rejected, knowing that he is "subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." There comes a point where debate is fruitless and separation becomes the only faithful option.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The modern **ecumenical movement**, which seeks organizational unity between denominations with widely divergent gospels (such as Protestantism and Roman Catholicism), stands in direct violation of this biblical command to separate from false gospels. This movement, which gained great momentum in the 20th century with the formation of the **World Council of Churches**, often prioritizes institutional unity over doctrinal truth. Many mainstream **Protestant** denominations (**Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian**) are heavily involved in this movement. This represents a significant departure from the position of the original Protestant Reformers, like **Martin Luther** and **John Calvin**, who, despite their own differences, were united in the belief that the Roman Catholic Church taught a false gospel from which believers must separate.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 17:21 ("that they all may be one"), Ephesians 4:3 ("endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit"), Romans 14:1 (receive him that is weak in the faith)

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 16:17, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 John 1:10-11, Titus 3:10, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for ecumenical unity with false gospels often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It equates the biblical call for unity among genuine believers who may differ on secondary issues (as in Romans 14) with a call for unity with groups that teach a fundamentally different gospel. These are not equivalent situations. Disagreeing about dietary laws is in a different category than disagreeing about whether salvation is by faith alone or by faith plus works. By treating all doctrinal disagreements as if they were of the same level of importance, the argument creates a false equivalence that justifies a level of compromise that the apostles would have condemned.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **relativism**, the belief that there is no objective, absolute truth, particularly in matters of religion. This philosophical mindset, which dominates modern culture, views all doctrinal claims as equally valid "perspectives." It sees the call for doctrinal separation as arrogant and intolerant. The Bible, however, operates on a foundation of **absolutism**. It claims



that there is one God, one Savior, one gospel, and that any deviation from that one true gospel is a damnable lie. The command to separate is not an act of arrogance; it is an act of fidelity to the objective, revealed truth of God.

**Question 75. What is the role of "good works" in the life of a believer, and how do they relate to salvation?**

**Answer 75. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The role of good works in the life of a believer is that of the **necessary and inevitable fruit**, not the saving root. The architectural design of salvation in the New Testament is absolutely clear: we are saved "by grace... through faith... **not of works**, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our justification, our legal standing before God, is based entirely on the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone. Good works contribute absolutely nothing to this. However, the very next verse provides the crucial balance: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Genuine, saving faith is a living, dynamic force that inevitably transforms a life. Therefore, good works are the indispensable evidence, the public proof, of an inward, saving faith. As James argues, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). They are not the cause of our salvation, but they are the necessary characteristic of our salvation. A life that is barren of good works is a life that gives no evidence of having been genuinely saved, calling into question the very reality of the person's profession of faith.

**Scripture References:** Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:14, Titus 3:5-8, James 2:14-26, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 7:16-21, Galatians 5:6, Hebrews 12:14

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** comes from those who misinterpret James 2:24 ("by works a man is justified, and not by faith only") to teach a form of justification by faith plus works. This sets James in direct opposition to Paul. The proper reconciliation is to see that Paul and James are using the word "justify" in two different senses. Paul is using it in its legal, forensic sense: how a person is declared righteous before God (by faith alone). James is using it in its demonstrative sense: how a person's faith is shown or proven to be genuine (by its works). Abraham was justified before God by faith in Genesis 15, long before he offered Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. His work in Genesis 22 *demonstrated* the reality of the faith he already possessed.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine that good works are meritorious and contribute to a person's justification is a central tenet of **Roman Catholicism**. The **Council of Trent** (1547) explicitly condemned the doctrine of justification by faith alone and declared that a believer's good works, performed in a state of grace, truly merit an increase of grace and eternal life. This creates a "faith plus works" gospel. On the other extreme, some forms of **Free Grace** theology can so radically separate faith from works that they teach a person can be genuinely saved and yet live a life completely devoid of good works or obedience, a view that seems to contradict the clear teaching of James and Jesus Himself.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** James 2:24, Matthew 19:16-17, Romans 2:6-7, Galatians 5:6

**Verses of Correction:** Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:4-5, Galatians 2:16

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for justification by faith plus works often commits the **Fallacy of Equivocation** on the word "justify." As explained above, it takes the word "justify" as used by James (meaning "to demonstrate" or "to prove") and assumes it has the same meaning as when used by Paul (meaning "to declare righteous"). By confusing these two distinct uses of the same word, the argument can create the false impression that the Bible contradicts itself or that Paul and James were teaching two different gospels. It's like hearing one person say, "The general was broken (demoted)," and another say, "The vase was broken (shattered)," and then concluding that generals and vases are the same thing.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between faith and works in a mechanical way rather than an organic way.** The "faith plus works" model sees faith and works as two separate ingredients that must be mixed together in the right proportion to produce salvation. The biblical model is organic. Faith is the living root, and works are the natural, inevitable fruit that grows from that root. You do not tape fruit onto a tree to make it alive; a living tree will naturally produce fruit. In the same way, we do not add works to our faith to be saved; a living faith will naturally produce the fruit of good works.

#### **Question 76. How does the concept of "Christian liberty" apply to matters of conscience and theological disagreement?**

**Answer 76. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Christian liberty is the glorious freedom purchased for us by Christ—a freedom from the condemnation of the law, the bondage of sin, and the fear of death. In the practical architecture of the church, this liberty is the very foundation for navigating matters of conscience and non-essential theological disagreements. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 14, provides the divine blueprint. He addresses disagreements over dietary laws and the observance of special days—matters not central to the gospel itself. His ruling is not to enforce a rigid uniformity, but to allow for liberty of conscience: "Let every man be **fully persuaded in his own mind.**" The principle is clear: in non-essential matters, the believer is free to follow their own conscience before God, and we are commanded not to judge or despise our brother who holds a different conviction. However, this liberty is not a license for theological anarchy or an excuse for sin. It is a freedom that must be exercised within two crucial boundaries. First, it must not be used to violate a clear command of Scripture or to cause a brother to stumble. Second, it must always be governed by love. The goal is not to flaunt our freedom, but to use our freedom to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." In the essentials of the faith, we must have unity. In the non-essentials, we must have liberty. In all things, we must have charity.

**Scripture References:** Romans 14:1-23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, Galatians 2:4, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, James 1:25, 1 Peter 2:16

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** One **rebuttal** comes from legalists, who argue that this liberty leads to moral laxity and doctrinal compromise. They seek to build fences around the law, creating extra-biblical rules and standards that they then bind on the consciences of others. This is the very error of the Pharisees that Jesus so strongly condemned. On the other extreme, a **rebuttal** comes from the libertine, who uses Christian liberty as a cloak for licentiousness, arguing that since they are

"not under the law," they are free to indulge the flesh. This is the error Paul refutes in Galatians 5:13, warning, "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Both extremes fail to grasp the biblical balance. Christian liberty is not the freedom to sin, but the freedom to serve God joyfully from a clean conscience, unburdened by the slavish fear of man-made rules.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The error of legalism, which curtails Christian liberty, is found in many forms. It is a hallmark of **Seventh-day Adventism**, with its rigid adherence to the Sabbath and dietary laws. It is also found in many **fundamentalist and Independent Baptist** churches, which often have long lists of extra-biblical prohibitions regarding things like music, dress, and entertainment. The opposite error, libertinism, can be found in some forms of **progressive Christianity**, which can use "grace" and "liberty" to excuse lifestyles and behaviors that are clearly condemned in Scripture. The historical tension between these two errors has been present throughout church history, from the Judaizers in Galatia to the antinomians in Corinth.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For legalism) Matthew 5:19, James 2:10; (For libertinism) Romans 6:14, Galatians 5:1

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 14:5, Galatians 5:13, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Peter 2:16, Colossians 2:16-23

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The legalist's argument often commits the **Slippery Slope** fallacy. This fallacy argues that if we allow for liberty in one small area, it will inevitably lead to a catastrophic slide into total moral chaos. The argument is, "If you allow someone to listen to contemporary Christian music, the next thing you know they'll be in a nightclub, and then they'll lose their faith entirely." This is a fallacious line of reasoning that fails to recognize that believers, guided by the Holy Spirit and the principles of Scripture, can exercise liberty responsibly without inevitably falling into licentiousness.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views morality in terms of external rules rather than internal principles**. This is a deontological or rule-based ethical framework. It believes that right and wrong are determined by adherence to a set of external regulations. The Bible, particularly the New Testament, presents a virtue-based ethical framework. Morality flows from the internal character of a person who has been transformed by the Holy Spirit. The guiding principle is not a list of rules, but the law of love. Christian liberty operates within this framework of principle-based ethics, not rule-based legalism.

**Question 77. What does the Bible teach about the assurance of salvation, and on what basis can a believer have this assurance?**

**Answer 77. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The Bible teaches that a believer can and should have a deep and abiding assurance of their salvation. This assurance, however, is not a static, one-time event based on a past decision, nor is it a presumptuous confidence in an unconditional decree. Biblical assurance is a living, dynamic confidence that is built upon a three-legged stool, and all three legs are necessary for it to be stable. The first leg is the **objective**,



**unshakable testimony of the Word of God.** We have assurance because we believe God's promises. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Our hope is anchored in the finished work of Christ and the reliability of His promises. The second leg is the **internal, subjective witness of the Holy Spirit**. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). This is the inner, intuitive confidence and sense of belonging that the Spirit gives to the child of God. The third leg, and the one most often neglected, is the **external, objective evidence of a transformed life**. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). A life of ongoing obedience and love for the brethren is the necessary, visible proof that our faith is genuine. True, biblical assurance rests securely on all three: God's promise, the Spirit's witness, and a life of fruit.

**Scripture References:** 1 John 5:13, Romans 8:16, 1 John 2:3-5, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:24, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Hebrews 6:11, 2 Peter 1:10, Colossians 2:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from the Calvinistic side is that true assurance can only be based on the unchangeable decree of God's election. They argue that basing assurance on one's works or feelings is unstable and leads to doubt. While it is true that our works do not save us, this argument dismisses the clear teaching of 1 John, which repeatedly points to our obedience and love as the evidence by which we "know" we are saved. On the other extreme, some Arminian views can base assurance almost entirely on a subjective feeling or a past decision, neglecting the need for the ongoing evidence of a transformed life. The biblical model is a balanced one that avoids the presumption of the former and the instability of the latter.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The basis for assurance is a key difference between theological systems. **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** has historically struggled with the doctrine of assurance. The "practical syllogism" developed by the **Puritans** in the 17th century was an attempt to find assurance by looking for the "marks of grace" in one's life, which often led to crippling introspection and doubt. Some forms of **Free Grace** theology, in contrast, teach that assurance is based solely on believing the facts of the gospel at a single point in time, regardless of one's subsequent life. The balanced, three-legged approach described above is most characteristic of the **Wesleyan** tradition, following **John Wesley** (18th century), who taught that assurance comes from the direct witness of the Spirit, confirmed by the fruit of a holy life.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For decree-based assurance) Romans 8:30, 2 Timothy 1:12; (For decision-based assurance) John 5:24

**Verses of Correction:** 1 John 5:13, 1 John 2:3, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that assurance must be based solely on God's decree or solely on a past decision commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents an "either-or" choice between two incomplete options. It argues that assurance is either 100% objective (the decree) or 100% subjective (a past decision/feeling). This ignores the biblical model, which is a synthesis of the objective (God's Word), the subjective (the Spirit's witness), and the evidential (a transformed life). It's like arguing that a healthy marriage is based either on the marriage license alone or on

the feelings of the wedding day alone, ignoring the ongoing, daily evidence of a loving and faithful relationship.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **seeks a form of mathematical or philosophical certainty that the Bible does not offer**. This is a rationalistic desire. It wants assurance to be a logical deduction (I believe X, therefore I am saved) or a metaphysical necessity (I am elect, therefore I am saved). The Bible, however, presents assurance in relational terms. It is the confidence that a child has in a loving father, a confidence that is based on the father's promises but is also confirmed by the daily experience of his love and the child's own obedient response. It is a living, breathing confidence, not a sterile, logical deduction.

### **Question 78. How should a local church practice discipline, especially in cases of serious sin or heresy?**

**Answer 78. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The practice of church discipline is not an optional program but a necessary architectural feature for maintaining the health, purity, and witness of the local church. The blueprint for this process is laid out with clarity by Jesus in Matthew 18 and applied by the Apostle Paul. The goal is always **redemptive and restorative**, not punitive. For personal sin between members, the process is progressive. First, there is a private confrontation (v. 15). If that fails, one or two witnesses are brought in (v. 16). If that fails, the matter is brought before the whole church (v. 17). If the person refuses to hear the church, they are to be removed from the fellowship, treated as an outsider ("as an heathen man and a publican"). In cases of serious, public, and unrepentant sin that threatens the integrity of the entire community (such as the incestuous relationship in 1 Corinthians 5), or the teaching of damnable heresy, the response is more immediate and decisive. Paul commands the church to "**put away from among yourselves that wicked person**" (1 Corinthians 5:13). This act of excommunication is a solemn, surgical procedure designed to protect the body from the spread of gangrene and to bring the unrepentant sinner to a place of brokenness that might lead to their ultimate restoration.

**Scripture References:** Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Galatians 6:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Titus 3:10-11, Romans 16:17

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The most common **rebuttal** in the modern church is that church discipline is unloving, judgmental, and contrary to the grace of God. This argument redefines "love" as sentimental tolerance and ignores the biblical understanding of love, which includes correction and discipline. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6). To allow a brother or sister to continue in a destructive sin without confrontation is the most unloving thing a church can do. Another **rebuttal** is that we should "not judge" (Matthew 7:1). This verse is almost always taken out of context. Jesus is condemning hypocritical, self-righteous judgment, not the righteous judgment that is necessary to maintain the standards of the community. In fact, in John 7:24, Jesus commands, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The practice of meaningful church discipline has been almost entirely abandoned in the vast majority of modern **evangelical, charismatic, and mainline Protestant** churches. This is largely due to a cultural shift toward individualism and a fear of

litigation. The "seeker-sensitive" model of the church, which prioritizes attracting and retaining attendees, sees discipline as a major obstacle to growth. This modern neglect stands in stark contrast to the practice of the early church and the Protestant Reformers. Both **John Calvin** in Geneva and the early **Anabaptists** saw the faithful practice of church discipline as one of the essential marks of a true church. The abandonment of this practice is a sign of a deep theological and moral decline in the Western church.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not"), Luke 6:37, Romans 14:13, Galatians 6:1

**Verses of Correction:** Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, Titus 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Romans 16:17

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument against church discipline from Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not") commits the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It isolates the first part of the verse while ignoring the rest of Jesus' statement: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged... And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Jesus is not forbidding all judgment; He is forbidding hypocritical judgment. He is teaching that we must deal with our own sin first before we can see clearly to help our brother with his. The passage is a prerequisite for proper judgment, not a prohibition of it.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **therapeutic individualism**. This is the dominant philosophy of modern Western culture. It views the individual's personal happiness and self-fulfillment as the highest good. In this framework, the church is seen as a voluntary association that exists to meet the individual's felt needs. Any act of corporate discipline that infringes on the individual's autonomy or causes them emotional discomfort is seen as inherently negative and "judgmental." The Bible, however, operates on a foundation of **covenantal communalism**. The church is a body, a family, a holy nation. The purity and health of the community take precedence over the felt needs of the individual. Discipline is not a therapeutic failure; it is a covenantal necessity.

### **Question 79. What is the relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church?**

**Answer 79. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church is one of **respectful submission, but not absolute subjection**. The ultimate authority in the life of the believer is Jesus Christ, speaking in and through His Word. The conscience, when it is clean, informed by Scripture, and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is the sacred faculty through which a believer discerns and obeys the will of God. The authority of the church and its leaders is a real, God-delegated authority, and believers are commanded to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Hebrews 13:17). However, this authority is derivative, not ultimate. It is only valid insofar as the church's teaching and commands are in alignment with the Word of God. When the authority of the church comes into conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture, the believer's conscience is bound to obey God rather than men, as the apostles themselves declared before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29). The



conscience is not a law unto itself, but it is also not the property of the church. It is the sacred ground where the individual soul stands directly before its Creator.

**Scripture References:** Acts 5:29, Hebrews 13:17, Romans 14:5, Romans 14:23, 1 Corinthians 10:29, 2 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Peter 2:19, Acts 24:16

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** comes from systems with a high view of clerical authority, which argue that the individual's conscience must be submitted to the interpretive authority of the church. It is argued that "private interpretation" leads to chaos and that the church has been given the authority to bind the conscience of its members. This view, however, can lead to spiritual tyranny and can compel believers to violate their conscience in the name of submission. On the other extreme, some argue for a radical individualism where the conscience is the only authority, and the church has no right to speak into a believer's life. This ignores the clear biblical commands to submit to and obey our leaders. The biblical balance is that the conscience is supreme, but it must be a conscience that is itself submitted to the Word of God and is willing to be taught and corrected by the leaders of the church.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrine of absolute submission of the conscience to the church is a cornerstone of **Roman Catholicism**. The Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Pope and bishops) is held to be the infallible interpreter of Scripture, and the individual Catholic is required to give "religious submission of mind and will" to its teachings. This was a primary point of contention during the Protestant Reformation. **Martin Luther**, at the **Diet of Worms (1521)**, famously declared, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God... to go against conscience is neither right nor safe." This declaration established the Protestant principle of the supremacy of the individual conscience when it is bound by Scripture. Some high-church **Anglican** and **Orthodox** traditions also hold a very high view of church authority over the individual conscience.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Hebrews 13:17, Matthew 18:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 5:29, Acts 17:11, Galatians 1:8, 1 Peter 5:3, 2 Corinthians 1:24

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for the absolute authority of the church over the conscience often commits the **Appeal to Authority** fallacy. It argues that a position is true simply because an authority (the church, the Pope, the pastor) says it is true. It short-circuits the process of personal study, discernment, and conviction. While it is good and right to respect and learn from God-given authorities, our ultimate reason for believing something must be that it is taught in the Word of God, not simply that a person or institution has declared it to be so. The Bereans are commended not for their blind submission, but for their noble-minded critical engagement with the apostle's teaching.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **collectivism**, the idea that the group is more important than the individual. In this philosophical framework, the individual conscience must be subsumed for the good and unity of the collective institution. The Bible, however, presents a profound respect for the individual. While it has a high view of the community (the church), it never sacrifices the

individual on the altar of the institution. Salvation is individual. Our standing before the judgment seat of Christ is individual. The relationship between the soul and its God is intensely personal. The church exists to nurture that individual relationship, not to usurp it.

**Question 80. How can believers from different theological perspectives maintain unity and fellowship in the body of Christ?**

**Answer 80. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Believers from different theological perspectives can and must maintain unity and fellowship by building on the right foundation and by correctly distinguishing the architectural load-bearing walls from the cosmetic, decorative features of the faith. The foundation of all true Christian unity is not a shared denominational label or a perfectly aligned systematic theology, but a shared faith in the **essential, non-negotiable truths of the gospel**. These are the great, central pillars of the faith: the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death on the cross for our sins, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. On these foundational truths, there can be no compromise. This is the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" for which we must earnestly contend. However, on secondary and tertiary doctrines—such as the precise timing of the rapture, the mode of baptism, the exact mechanics of divine sovereignty, or the style of worship music—we must exercise the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The biblical model for unity is found in Ephesians 4:1-3: "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This unity is not something we create, but something the Spirit has already created, and which we are called to maintain through "lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

**Scripture References:** Ephesians 4:1-6, Romans 14:1, Romans 15:7, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:1-4, Colossians 3:12-15

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** One **rebuttal** is that doctrinal purity requires separation even on secondary issues. This is the argument of the schismatic, who believes that their particular understanding of every fine point of theology is essential. This often leads to endless division and the creation of micro-denominations, a practice Paul condemned in Corinth. On the other extreme is the ecumenist, who argues that unity requires us to overlook even essential gospel truths for the sake of institutional fellowship. This leads to a false unity that is not based on the truth of Christ. The biblical path is the narrow road between these two errors: a fierce commitment to the essentials of the gospel, coupled with a gracious and charitable liberty in the non-essentials.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The error of schism over non-essentials is a particular problem in some **Independent Fundamental Baptist** and **Landmark Baptist** circles, which can often divide over very minor points of doctrine or practice. The opposite error of a false ecumenism is prevalent in many **mainline Protestant** denominations (**United Methodist, ELCA Lutheran, PCUSA Presbyterian**) and is the driving force behind the **World Council of Churches**, which often promotes a form of unity that sacrifices core biblical doctrines on the altar of social and political cooperation. This movement, which gained prominence in the 20th century, stands in contrast to the Reformation principle of unity based on a shared confession of the gospel.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For schism) Romans 16:17, 2 John 1:10; (For false ecumenism) John 17:21

**Verses of Correction:** Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 14:1-5, Philippians 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument of the schismatic often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It treats all doctrines as if they were of equal importance. It equates a disagreement over a secondary issue (like eschatology) with a disagreement over a primary issue (like the deity of Christ) and calls for the same level of separation for both. This is a failure to distinguish between different categories of theological truth. It's like a doctor treating a common cold with the same radical surgery used to treat a malignant tumor. The treatment must be appropriate to the severity of the illness.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **sectarianism**, the belief that one's own group possesses the complete and total truth, and that all other groups are in significant error. This philosophical mindset is rooted in pride and an inability to recognize that no single individual or group has a perfect understanding of the infinite mind of God. The biblical worldview, in contrast, calls for intellectual humility. While we must be firm on the clear, central truths of the gospel, we must also acknowledge that on secondary matters, we "see through a glass, darkly." This humility is the very soil in which true, charitable unity can grow.

## **Challenging Key Calvinist Proof Texts**

**Question 81. In Romans 9, is Paul discussing individual salvation or God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption through Israel?**

**Answer 81. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A careful architectural analysis of Romans 9 reveals that its primary subject matter is not a timeless, abstract blueprint for individual salvation and damnation. Rather, it is a deeply contextual, historical argument about **God's sovereign purposes as they are worked out through the nation of Israel** in the grand sweep of redemptive history. The chapter opens with Paul's intense sorrow for his "kinsmen according to the flesh," the Israelites. The question that drives the entire argument is this: Has the Word of God failed because the chosen nation has, for the most part, rejected its Messiah? Paul's answer is a resounding "No." He demonstrates that God's purpose has never been tied to mere physical lineage, but has always been based on His sovereign choice. The examples he uses—Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau—are not about who goes to heaven, but about who would carry the covenant promise and the Messianic line. His example of Pharaoh is not about an eternal decree of damnation, but about God's sovereign right to use a rebellious world leader to display His power and advance His redemptive plan. The entire chapter is a theodicy, a defense of God's faithfulness to Israel in light of the surprising and glorious inclusion of the Gentiles. To rip these verses out of this rich, salvation-historical soil and plant them in the thin, philosophical soil of individual predestination is to do a grave injustice to the apostle's argument.

**Scripture References:** Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-4, Romans 11:1-2, Genesis 17:19-21, Genesis 25:23, Malachi 1:2-3, Exodus 9:16-17



**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that while the context is indeed national, the principles of divine sovereignty revealed are universally applicable to individuals. The argument is that the way God sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau for historical purposes is a "case study" that reveals the way He sovereignly chooses individuals for eternal salvation. This argument, however, makes an unwarranted logical leap. It assumes that God's methodology is uniform across different categories of action. But God's choice of a nation for a specific, temporary, historical role is not in the same category as His offer of eternal salvation to all individuals. Furthermore, if the analogy were followed consistently, it would undermine Calvinism. Esau was not eternally damned; he was blessed and became the father of a great nation. The hardening of Israel is not final; Paul spends all of Romans 11 explaining how they can be grafted back in. The examples do not support the doctrine of unconditional, eternal reprobation.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The decontextualized, individualistic interpretation of Romans 9 is the absolute bedrock of **Calvinistic** soteriology. It is the central pillar in the systems of **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, and it is the primary text appealed to in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches to defend the doctrine of Unconditional Election and Reprobation. Without this specific interpretation of Romans 9, the entire TULIP system would be left without its most powerful and explicit biblical support. This interpretation is a defining feature of the Reformed tradition and a major point of departure from the **Arminian/Wesleyan** and **Anabaptist** traditions.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-18, Romans 9:21-23

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 9:1-5 (establishes the context as national Israel), Romans 9:30-32 (attributes Israel's failure to their own unbelief, not a decree), Romans 10:13 ("whosoever"), Romans 11:23 (proves the "hardening" is not final)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The individualistic interpretation of Romans 9 commits the **Fallacy of Composition**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of the parts must be true of the whole, or in this case, that the principles governing the whole (God's sovereign plan for nations in history) must be identical to the principles governing the parts (the eternal destiny of every individual). Paul is painting on a grand, historical canvas, and the argument zooms in on a few brushstrokes and misinterprets them as a detailed portrait of individual metaphysics. The fallacy is in confusing the scale and the subject of the argument.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges metaphysics over history**. This is a philosophical bias that seeks timeless, abstract, universal principles rather than engaging with the concrete, particular, historical narrative of the text. It wants Romans 9 to be a chapter of systematic theology about the eternal decrees of God. The Bible, however, presents it as a chapter of redemptive history about the faithfulness of God to His covenant people. The philosophical error is to de-historicize the text, stripping it of its narrative context in order to turn it into a set of abstract, philosophical propositions.

**Question 82. In John 6:44 ("No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"), does the word "draw" imply an irresistible force, or a wooing and enabling?**

**Answer 82. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The word "draw" in John 6:44, while powerful, does not imply an irresistible, coercive force that violates the human will. A careful architectural study of the word's usage and its context reveals it to be a **powerful, persuasive, and enabling wooing**. The Greek word is *helkuo*. While it can be used for a forceful dragging (as in dragging a net), this is not its only meaning, and the context must be our guide. The most important contextual key is provided by Jesus Himself in the same Gospel. In John 12:32, Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw** [*helkuo*] **all men** unto me." Since it is a fact that not all men are saved, this "drawing" cannot be irresistible. It must refer to the universal, moral, and spiritual attraction of the cross. Therefore, the drawing of the Father in John 6:44 is best understood as the essential, divine initiative that overcomes spiritual inability and makes it possible for a person to come to Christ. It is the life-giving summons of the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that awakens the soul and enables it to respond. It is a drawing that can be, and tragically is, resisted by a rebellious will.

**Scripture References:** John 6:44, John 12:32, Song of Solomon 1:4 ("Draw me, we will run after thee"), Jeremiah 31:3 ("with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"), Acts 7:51

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to insist on the most forceful meaning of *helkuo*, arguing that it always implies a resistance that is overcome. Proponents will dismiss the use in John 12:32 as a different kind of "general" drawing, while the drawing in John 6:44 is a "special, effectual" drawing. This is the classic "two calls" theory, which is a theological construct with no direct textual support. It is an ad hoc explanation created to resolve the contradiction that the system creates. The simpler, more consistent interpretation is that there is one gospel drawing, which is powerful and universal in its sufficiency, but which is not coercive.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of "draw" as an irresistible force is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** theology. It is the primary proof text for the doctrine of Irresistible Grace (the 'I' in TULIP). This view, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, is a logical necessity of the system developed by **Augustine and Calvin**. If man is totally unable, then the grace that draws him must be irresistible. This interpretation is a major point of contention with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees the drawing as a universal, enabling, but resistible grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 6:37, John 6:44, John 6:65

**Verses of Correction:** John 12:32, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, John 5:40

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "draw" in John 6:44 must mean an irresistible force commits the **Fallacy of Inconsistent Application**. It insists on the most forceful possible meaning of the word in this one verse, while conveniently ignoring another use of the very same word by the very same speaker in the very same book (John 12:32) where that forceful meaning is impossible. This is an inconsistent and self-serving hermeneutic. It's like arguing that the word "run" always means "to move at a fast pace," and then, when confronted with the phrase "my nose is running," refusing to adjust the definition.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views divine influence in mechanistic terms rather than personal terms**. The deterministic model thinks of the soul as an object that is moved by forces. If the divine force is greater than the soul's inertia, the soul moves. The Bible, however, presents a personal and relational model. The Father does not "drag" a person to the Son like a magnet dragging a piece of metal. He "draws" them with the "cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4). It is the wooing of a lover, the call of a father, the persuasion of a king. It is a personal, relational influence, not an impersonal, mechanical force.

**Question 83. In Acts 13:48 ("as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"), does "ordained" refer to a pre-temporal decree or a present disposition of the heart?**

**Answer 83. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The word "ordained" in Acts 13:48, a key proof text for the doctrine of unconditional election, is best understood not as a reference to a secret, pre-temporal, fatalistic decree, but as a description of the **present disposition of the hearts** of the Gentile hearers. The Greek word is *tasso*, and while it can mean "appointed," its primary range of meaning has to do with being "arranged, ordered, or disposed." The context of the passage is a contrast. The envious, blaspheming Jews had just "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life" (v. 46). In stark contrast, the Gentiles "were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord," and as many as were *disposed* or *arrayed* for eternal life believed. The verb is in the passive or middle voice, which can suggest that they "set themselves in order" or "were disposed" for eternal life. It describes a receptive posture, a heart that had been prepared by the Spirit's prior work to receive the gospel with joy. It is not describing a list of names written in a decree from eternity past, but the present, spiritual condition of a group of people who were ready to embrace the truth they were hearing.

**Scripture References:** Acts 13:46-48, Luke 7:29-30, 1 Corinthians 16:15, Romans 13:1

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that *tasso* in this context must refer to a divine, sovereign appointment, and that any other interpretation is an attempt to read human free will into the text. Proponents will point to other uses of the word that refer to an appointment to an office or a station. However, the meaning of a word is always determined by its context. In this context of conversion and response to the gospel, the meaning of a "disposition" or "inclination" fits perfectly with the narrative flow and with the broader biblical teaching on faith as a response to the hearing of the Word. To insist on the strongest possible deterministic meaning is to force the text to conform to a preconceived system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of "ordained" as an eternal, unconditional decree of election is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** theology. It is one of the most frequently cited proof texts for the 'U' (Unconditional Election) in TULIP and is central to the teaching of **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This interpretation, which became standard after **John Calvin**, is necessary to support the idea that faith is the result of election, rather than the condition for it. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** interpretation, which sees the word as describing a Spirit-prepared, receptive heart, and was a view held by many of the early Greek-speaking church fathers.



**Verses of Apparent Support:** Acts 13:48, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 13:46 ("judged yourselves unworthy"), John 3:19 ("men loved darkness"), Matthew 13:15 ("their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that "ordained" must mean a pre-temporal decree commits the **Fallacy of the Excluded Middle** (a form of false dilemma). It presents only two options: either the people believed because of their own unaided free will (Pelagianism), or they believed because they were unconditionally decreed to do so from eternity (Calvinism). It excludes the biblical **middle ground**: that they believed because the Holy Spirit had graciously worked in their hearts to make them receptive and well-disposed to the gospel they were hearing, enabling them to make a genuine faith response.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation in terms of a secret, hidden decree rather than a public, proclaimed message**. The deterministic model makes the hidden, eternal decree the ultimate reality and the cause of salvation. The preaching of the gospel is merely the means by which this decree is brought to pass in time. The biblical model, however, makes the proclaimed Word the central, life-giving event. Salvation comes through the hearing of the Word and the response of faith. The focus is on the public, historical event of the gospel encounter, not on a secret, metaphysical decree.

**Question 84. When Jesus says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John 17:9), is He speaking about the scope of His atonement or the specific focus of His high priestly prayer?**

**Answer 84. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** When Jesus prays, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," He is speaking with absolute clarity about the **specific focus of His High Priestly prayer**, not about the intended scope of His atoning sacrifice. The entire chapter of John 17 is the "Holy of Holies" of the New Testament, an intimate, sacred moment where the Son is speaking to the Father on the eve of His crucifixion. His immediate concern in this prayer is for the protection, sanctification, and unity of His disciples—the "ones thou hast given me" who were with Him in the room—and for all future believers who would come to faith through their message. It is the prayer of a shepherd for his specific flock. To take this intensely personal, pastoral prayer and use it as a theological sledgehammer to limit the scope of the atonement is a profound act of decontextualization. The same apostle who recorded this prayer also wrote that Jesus is the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the **sins of the whole world**" (1 John 2:2). A specific prayer for a specific group does not and cannot negate the universal provision of His sacrifice.

**Scripture References:** John 17:9, John 17:20-21, 1 John 2:2, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, 1 Timothy 2:4-6

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the group for whom Jesus prays (the elect) is the same group for whom He died. The argument is that His work of intercession and His work of atonement must be coextensive. If He only intercedes for the elect, He must have only

atoned for the elect. This argument, however, is a logical inference, not a direct statement of Scripture. It assumes a neat, systematic consistency that the Bible does not always provide. It is entirely possible for Christ to have made a universal provision in His death, while focusing His specific High Priestly intercession on those who have received that provision by faith. A lawyer can pay a debt sufficient to free every prisoner in a jail, while focusing his specific legal counsel only on those who have accepted his services.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This verse is one of the primary proof texts for the doctrine of Limited Atonement as taught in **Calvinistic** churches (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). The system developed by **John Calvin** requires that all of Christ's saving benefits—including His atonement and His intercession—be limited exclusively to the elect. Therefore, John 17:9 is interpreted as a definitive statement on the particularity of the atonement. This interpretation is a cornerstone of the Reformed tradition and was a key point of debate at the **Synod of Dort** (1619) against the Arminians, who argued that the verse must be understood in its immediate, pastoral context.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 17:9, John 10:11, John 10:15, Ephesians 5:25

**Verses of Correction:** 1 John 2:2, John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:19

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that this verse limits the atonement commits the **Fallacy of Hasty Generalization**. It takes a specific, particular statement made in a very specific context (a prayer for His disciples) and generalizes it into a universal, absolute principle that governs the entire scope of Christ's atoning work. It fails to consider the broader testimony of Scripture, which speaks in universal terms about the atonement. It's like hearing a father say a prayer at the dinner table, "God, please bless my wife and children," and then concluding that this man has no love or concern for anyone else in the world.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's actions must be understood in terms of a strict, logical economy**. This is a philosophical bias that values tidiness and efficiency. It assumes that it would be "inefficient" or "illogical" for Christ to die for those who will not be saved. Therefore, His prayer, His death, and His election must all have a one-to-one correspondence. The Bible, however, presents a God of extravagant, and sometimes seemingly "wasteful," grace. He sends the rain on the just and the unjust. The sower casts the seed on all kinds of ground, even the ground where it will not bear fruit. The God of the Bible is not a divine accountant ensuring a perfectly balanced ledger; He is a lavishly generous King whose grace overflows the neat and tidy boundaries of human logic.

**Question 85. In Ephesians 1:4-5, are believers chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for salvation, or for the purpose of being holy and blameless?**

**Answer 85. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A careful architectural reading of Ephesians 1:4-5 reveals that the focus of our predestination is not the initial act of salvation, but the **glorious purpose and outcome** of that salvation. The text says that God "hath chosen us **in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.**" The purpose of the choice is explicitly stated: our sanctification. The next verse continues this thought,

stating that He has "predestinated us unto the **adoption of children.**" Again, the focus is on our new status and relationship as sons of God. The key phrase is "in him." The election is not of individuals *to be put into* Christ, but of a corporate body of people who are found "in Christ." God's eternal plan was to have a holy and blameless family, and He determined that all who are united to His Son by faith would be part of that family. The predestination is about the destination of the train, not about which specific passengers are forced to get on board. It is God's eternal purpose for the Church, the body of Christ.

**Scripture References:** Ephesians 1:4-5, Romans 8:29, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:1-2, 1 Peter 1:2

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that this is a distinction without a difference. It is argued that if God chose us for the purpose of being holy, He must have also chosen us for the salvation that makes that holiness possible. This argument, however, collapses the different elements of God's plan into a single, deterministic decree. The Bible allows for a more nuanced view. God can set the terms of the covenant (all who are in Christ will be adopted and made holy) without predetermining who will meet those terms by faith. The choice is to be "in Christ." All who make that choice, enabled by grace, enter into the blessings that God predestined for those who would be in His Son.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of this passage as teaching the unconditional election of individuals to salvation is a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system developed by **John Calvin** sees this verse as a clear statement of God's pre-temporal, sovereign choice of specific individuals for salvation. This interpretation is necessary to support the 'U' in TULIP. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the election as being conditional upon foreseen faith, and the **corporate election** view (common among many Anabaptists and some modern New Testament scholars), which sees the passage as describing God's choice of the Church as a body, not specific individuals.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11, Romans 8:29-30

**Verses of Correction:** (The same verses, read in their corporate and purposeful context, provide the correction.) Ephesians 1:4 ("that we should be holy"), Ephesians 1:5 ("unto the adoption of children"), Romans 8:29 ("to be conformed to the image of his Son")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The individualistic, deterministic interpretation of this passage often commits the **Fallacy of Misplaced Precision**. It takes the general, glorious language of God's eternal purpose for His people and tries to turn it into a precise, metaphysical blueprint for the eternal destiny of every single individual. It imposes a level of systematic, individualistic precision onto a text that is written in the soaring, doxological language of corporate praise. It's like analyzing a beautiful, epic poem about a nation's destiny and trying to turn it into a detailed census report of every single citizen.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views election in individualistic and atomistic terms**. This is a modern, Western philosophical bias. The Bible, particularly the writings of Paul, is deeply corporate and covenantal. Paul is almost always thinking in terms of the body, the community, the



"us." The idea of God's plan is primarily about His purpose for His people, the Church. The individual finds their place within that corporate plan. The philosophical error is to reverse this, starting with the abstract, eternal decree for the individual and then seeing the church as merely the sum total of those decreed individuals.

**Question 86. How should we understand the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9:22-23?**

**Answer 86. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9 must be understood within the chapter's controlling context of God's sovereign dealings with **nations and groups in history**, not as a description of God's eternal, unconditional predestination of individuals to heaven or hell. The "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" refer to those, like Pharaoh or the unbelieving portion of national Israel, who through their own persistent pride and rebellion, make themselves ripe for God's judgment. It is critically important to note the voice of the verb: the Greek for "fitted" is in the middle or passive voice, which strongly suggests that they **fitted themselves** for destruction. Their condition is a result of their own actions. In contrast, the "vessels of mercy" are those whom God "had **afore prepared** unto glory." Here, the verb is active. God is the one who actively prepares the vessels of mercy, which in this context are the believing remnant of Israel and the believing Gentiles who are being called into the church. The passage is not about God creating some people for the express purpose of damning them. It is about God's patience with the self-hardening vessels of wrath, and His active, gracious preparation of the vessels of mercy to display the riches of His glory.

**Scripture References:** Romans 9:17-24, Jeremiah 18:1-10, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 1 Peter 2:8, Proverbs 16:4

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that the potter has absolute power over the clay and that the distinction in the voice of the verb ("fitted" vs. "prepared") is a minor grammatical point that should not override the clear statement of God's sovereign power. This argument, however, minimizes a crucial detail of the text. The Holy Spirit inspired the precise grammar of the text for a reason. The difference between the passive/middle voice for the vessels of wrath and the active voice for the vessels of mercy is a profound theological statement about responsibility. It attributes the state of the vessels of wrath to themselves, and the state of the vessels of mercy to God's grace. To ignore this is to flatten the text to make it fit a deterministic system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of the "vessels of wrath" as individuals unconditionally and eternally predestined to damnation is a central and terrifying component of **high-Calvinism**. This doctrine of reprobation, taught by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, and solidified in confessions like the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646), is seen as a necessary corollary to the doctrine of unconditional election. It is taught in many **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This interpretation is rejected by **Arminians, Wesleyans, and Anabaptists** as a monstrous doctrine that maligns the character of God and contradicts His revealed desire for all to be saved.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:21-23, Proverbs 16:4, 1 Peter 2:8, Jude 1:4

**Verses of Correction:** Romans 9:22 (the passive/middle voice of "fitted"), Jeremiah 18:6-10 (the potter analogy in context, where the clay's fate is conditional), 2 Timothy 2:21 ("If a man therefore purge himself... he shall be a vessel unto honour"), 2 Peter 3:9

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for unconditional reprobation from this text often commits the **Fallacy of Slothful Induction**. This fallacy occurs when a person ignores relevant evidence and details that would undermine their conclusion. In this case, the crucial grammatical detail of the passive/middle voice of the verb "fitted" is ignored because it complicates the deterministic interpretation. A proper induction would take all the details of the text into account and build a conclusion that can explain them all. The slothful induction simply ignores the inconvenient details to arrive at a preconceived conclusion more easily.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's glory in terms of a display of raw power rather than as a display of righteous character**. The deterministic model sees the ultimate purpose of the vessels of wrath as a demonstration of God's sovereign power to do as He pleases. The Bible, however, presents God's glory as the manifestation of His holy, just, and merciful character. He is glorified in judging the vessels of wrath not because He decreed their rebellion, but because His judgment upon their self-chosen rebellion is perfectly just. He is glorified in saving the vessels of mercy because His grace is perfectly merciful. The focus is on the glory of His character, not the glory of His power.

**Question 87. Does Philippians 2:13 ("For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure") negate the role of human choice and effort?**

**Answer 87. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The glorious declaration of Philippians 2:13 does not negate the role of human choice and effort; it is the very **foundation that makes human choice and effort possible and effective**. The verse cannot be architecturally separated from the command that immediately precedes it: "**Work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling. **For** it is God which worketh in you..." The word "For" is the divine hinge that connects the two clauses. It means "because." We are commanded to work, precisely *because* God is the one who is at work within us. This is not a contradiction; it is a divine synergy. God's internal work of grace—giving us the desire ("to will") and the power ("to do")—is the necessary prerequisite for our external work of obedience. The verse does not teach a divine monergism where the believer is a passive puppet. It teaches a divine-human cooperation where God's sovereign grace enables and empowers our responsible, diligent effort. It is a call to active, strenuous partnership with the God who is graciously at work in our hearts.

**Scripture References:** Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Colossians 1:29, Hebrews 13:20-21

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is to argue that God's work is the ultimate and determining cause, and our "working" is merely the inevitable effect of His irresistible grace. In this view, our effort is not a genuine, cooperative contribution, but simply the necessary outworking of God's prior, determinative work. This interpretation, however, diminishes the force of the command to "work out" our salvation "with fear and trembling." If the

outcome is already guaranteed and our effort is merely a predetermined effect, why the call for fear and trembling? The language suggests a real, ongoing struggle that requires our diligent participation, not a passive submission to an irresistible force.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of this verse as teaching divine monergism (God working alone) is central to **Calvinistic** theology. The system of **Augustine and Calvin** requires that God be the sole, determining agent in salvation and sanctification. Therefore, any human effort must be seen as the effect, not a cooperative cause, of God's work. This is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view of "synergism," which sees this verse as a prime example of God's grace and human free will working together in the process of salvation and sanctification.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Philippians 2:13, John 6:44, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Verses of Correction:** Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Peter 1:10, Hebrews 12:14

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The monergistic interpretation of this passage can be seen as a **Fallacy of Composition**. It assumes that because God is the ultimate and primary cause of our sanctification, He must be the *only* cause. It fails to allow for the biblical category of secondary, cooperative causation. It's like looking at a beautiful garden and saying, "The sun is the ultimate cause of this garden's growth, therefore the gardener's work of planting, watering, and weeding is not a real cause at all." The reality is that both the sun and the gardener are real causes, working together to produce the final result.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between divine and human agency as a zero-sum game**. This philosophical model assumes that for every degree of agency attributed to humanity, a corresponding degree of agency must be subtracted from God. To give God 100% of the glory, man's contribution must be reduced to 0%. The Bible, however, presents a different model. God is most glorified not by our passivity, but by our active, joyful, Spirit-empowered cooperation with His grace. His power is made perfect in our weakness, and His glory is magnified when we, as His co-laborers, bear much fruit.

**Question 88. In John 10:26, does Jesus say that people do not believe because they are not His sheep, or that they are not His sheep because they do not believe?**

**Answer 88. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A careful examination of the grammar and the immediate context of John 10:26 reveals that Jesus is stating that the people's **unbelief is the very evidence** that proves they are not His sheep. He says, "But ye believe not, **because** ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." The word "because" points to the reason for their unbelief. What is the defining characteristic of His sheep? He immediately clarifies in the next verse: "My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they **follow me**." Therefore, being one of His sheep is not a secret, pre-temporal, metaphysical status. It is a present, relational reality defined by the actions of hearing and following. The reason the Pharisees do not believe is that they are not in this relationship; they are not hearing and following. Their unbelief is the proof of their non-sheep status. To reverse the logic and say that they are *unable* to believe *because* they were not pre-



selected as sheep is to import a deterministic framework that the text itself does not require. The statement is a description of their present, rebellious condition, not a declaration of a past, fatalistic decree.

**Scripture References:** John 10:26-27, John 8:47, John 5:38-40, John 3:19-20

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to take the verse at what they see as its plain, causal sense: the state of "not being a sheep" is the cause of the action of "not believing." They argue that this is a clear statement that the status of election precedes and determines the response of faith. This interpretation, however, creates a tension with the immediate context, where the status of being a sheep is defined by the actions of hearing and following. The more consistent reading is that the two statements are mutually interpreting. They are not His sheep *because* they do not believe, and they do not believe *because* they are not His sheep. It is a description of a single, unified state of rebellion, not a metaphysical cause-and-effect sequence.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of this verse as teaching that a pre-ordained elect status is the cause of faith is a standard teaching in **Calvinistic** circles (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). This is a key proof text for the doctrine of Unconditional Election. The system developed by **John Calvin** requires that election be the cause, and faith the effect. Therefore, this verse is interpreted through that deterministic grid. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which would see the verse as a description of the Pharisees' present state of willful rejection of Jesus's voice, which is the very thing that defines them as not being His sheep.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** John 10:26, John 6:37, John 6:65, Acts 13:48

**Verses of Correction:** John 10:27 ("My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me"), John 8:47 ("He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God"), John 5:40 ("ye will not come to me")

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The deterministic interpretation of this verse can be seen as a **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc** fallacy (after this, therefore because of this), though applied to a state rather than an event. It assumes a specific and unproven causal relationship. The argument is: "A person must be a sheep before they can believe. These people do not believe. Therefore, it is because they are not sheep." It assumes the very causal link it is trying to prove. The text itself simply states a correlation: the state of not being a sheep and the action of not believing are present together. The more biblically consistent view is that the willful action of not believing is what defines the state of not being a sheep.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views personal identity in terms of a static, essential property rather than a dynamic, relational reality**. This is a philosophical bias toward essentialism. It sees "being a sheep" as a fixed, metaphysical essence that is implanted in a person from eternity. The Bible, however, presents identity in more relational and functional terms. You *are* what you *do*. You are a sheep if you hear and follow the Shepherd. You are a child of God if you do the will of the Father. The philosophical error is to reverse this, arguing that you do what you do because of what you essentially are, which leads to a deterministic and fatalistic view of human identity.

**Question 89. How does the immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 ("There is none righteous, no, not one") inform our understanding of its application to all of humanity?**

**Answer 89. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The immediate context of Paul's catena of Old Testament quotations in Romans 3:10-18 is a legal argument designed to prove the **universal guilt of all humanity**, both Jew and Gentile, before the righteous bar of God's law. His purpose is to demonstrate, beyond any doubt, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (v. 23) and that, therefore, "by the deeds of the law there shall **no flesh be justified** in his sight" (v. 20). The passage is a masterful diagnosis of the human condition, a declaration of our universal legal condemnation. It is not, however, a clinical definition of our metaphysical incapacity. To take this passage, which is about our universal guilt, and use it as a proof text for the doctrine of "Total Inability"—the idea that no unregenerate person is able to seek God or respond to His grace—is to press the text beyond its intended purpose. The passage describes what man *does* in his fallen state (he does not seek God), not what he is *incapable* of doing when confronted by the drawing power of the gospel. It establishes our desperate need for a Savior; it does not define the mechanics of how we respond to that Savior.

**Scripture References:** Romans 3:9-23, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Galatians 3:22

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the description of man's actions ("none that seeketh after God") is a direct result of his inherent nature and inability. The argument is that the reason no one seeks is because no one *can* seek. This is a logical inference, but it is not what the text itself explicitly states. The text is a description of behavior, not a definition of capacity. Furthermore, this interpretation must then ignore other scriptures where God commands men to seek Him (Isaiah 55:6) and where it is said that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), which would be meaningless commands if seeking were impossible.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This passage is a foundational proof text for the doctrine of Total Depravity (the 'T' in TULIP) as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system developed by **Augustine and Calvin** requires a doctrine of absolute inability, and this passage is interpreted as providing the definitive biblical support for it. This interpretation is central to the Reformed tradition. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which agrees that the passage teaches the universal depravity and guilt of man, but does not agree that it teaches an absolute inability to respond to God's prevenient grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 3:10-18, Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 2:14

**Verses of Correction:** Acts 17:27 ("That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him"), Hebrews 11:6, Isaiah 55:6, Deuteronomy 4:29

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that this passage teaches total inability commits the **Fallacy of the Single Cause**. It takes the complex reality of human sinfulness and reduces it to a single, metaphysical cause: inability. It ignores the other causes that the Bible gives for why men do not seek God: they love darkness (John 3:19), their hearts are hardened, they are blinded by the

god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and they are rebellious. By oversimplifying the problem and reducing it to a single cause, the argument creates a neat philosophical point but loses the multifaceted, moral, and spiritual complexity of the biblical diagnosis.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses a universal description with a metaphysical definition**. This is a category error. The passage in Romans 3 is a powerful, poetic, and universal description of human behavior in a fallen state. The deterministic interpretation takes this description and turns it into a rigid, metaphysical definition of human nature's essential capacities. It's like reading a report that says, "In this impoverished country, there are none that eat a balanced meal," and then concluding that the people are metaphysically incapable of digesting a balanced meal. The description of their condition is not a definition of their constitution.

**Question 90. When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, does it mean that He actively creates unbelief, or that He gives people over to their own rebellious choices?**

**Answer 90. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" a heart, it is describing a solemn, judicial act of God, but not an act where He creates evil or unbelief from scratch. The consistent architectural pattern of Scripture shows that divine hardening is a **reactive judgment**, a consequence that follows persistent human rebellion. The classic case is Pharaoh, where the text reveals a dynamic interplay. The Bible says that "Pharaoh **hardened his heart**" (Exodus 8:15, 32), and it also says that "the LORD **hardened the heart of Pharaoh**" (Exodus 9:12). This is not a contradiction. The process begins with Pharaoh's own prideful, self-willed rebellion. In response to this established pattern of defiance, God acts judicially to confirm and solidify the hardness that Pharaoh himself has chosen. It is the act of giving a rebel over to his rebellion. It is a withdrawal of restraining mercy that allows the sin already present to become fully entrenched. This same principle is seen in Romans 1, where God "gave them up" to their sins *because* they first refused to glorify Him. God does not infuse the poison of unbelief; He judicially allows the self-chosen poison to run its fatal course.

**Scripture References:** Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:34, 1 Samuel 6:6, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 10:20, Romans 9:18, Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40, Romans 1:24-28, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is to focus solely on Romans 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," and to argue that this demonstrates a purely sovereign and unconditional act of God. This interpretation, however, ignores the vast Old Testament context (particularly the story of Pharaoh) that informs Paul's statement. It also ignores the clear statements where Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. A topical study requires that all the evidence be harmonized, and when it is, the pattern of reactive, judicial hardening becomes clear. The argument from Romans 9 isolates the verse from its narrative and theological background to make it support a preconceived system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The interpretation of hardening as a direct, unconditional, and sometimes proactive decree of God is a necessary component of **hyper-Calvinism**. This view, taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, sees the hardening of the reprobate as the



direct outworking of God's eternal decree, just as the salvation of the elect is. This flows from the systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, which prioritize meticulous divine sovereignty. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which has consistently taught that hardening is a divine judgment that follows and confirms a person's own willful and persistent rejection of grace.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Romans 9:17-18, Exodus 4:21, Exodus 7:3, John 12:40

**Verses of Correction:** Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, 1 Samuel 6:6, Hebrews 3:8-13, Psalm 95:8, Romans 1:21-24

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument for unconditional hardening commits the **Fallacy of Suppressed Evidence**. It consistently highlights the verses where God is the active agent in hardening, while systematically ignoring or downplaying the significance of the parallel verses where the human individual is the active agent. By presenting only one side of the textual evidence, it creates a distorted and imbalanced conclusion. An honest presentation would acknowledge the full dynamic and seek to harmonize both sets of data, which leads to the conclusion of a reactive, judicial hardening rather than a proactive, unconditional one.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views causality in simplistic, unilateral terms**. This philosophical bias assumes that for any event, there must be a single, ultimate, determining cause. It struggles with the biblical concept of complex, concurrent agency, where both God and human beings can be said to be real actors in the same event. The hardening of Pharaoh is a prime example of this concurrent agency. The philosophical error is to reduce this complex, personal, and judicial interaction to a simple, unilateral, deterministic act, which sacrifices the biblical nuance for the sake of a tidier, but less accurate, philosophical system.

## Synthesis and Conclusion

**Question 91. After examining all the relevant scriptures, can the five points of TULIP be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching?**

**Answer 91. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** After a thorough and comprehensive architectural examination of the entirety of biblical teaching, the five points of TULIP, as a systematic and interdependent framework, **cannot be harmonized** with the full counsel of God's Word. While each of the five points touches on a biblical theme—depravity, election, atonement, grace, and perseverance—the specific, rigid, and deterministic formulation of each point within the TULIP system creates a structure that is in direct conflict with vast and vital sections of Scripture. The system requires one to believe in a Total Inability that renders the Bible's universal commands to repent and believe nonsensical. It requires an Unconditional Election that contradicts the Bible's clear teaching on God's universal love and His character as "no respecter of persons." It requires a Limited Atonement that makes the "whosoever will" invitations of the gospel seem insincere. It requires an Irresistible Grace that is directly refuted by biblical accounts of the Holy Spirit being resisted. And it requires a Perseverance of the Saints that nullifies the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about the real danger of falling away. TULIP is a logically coherent

philosophical system, but it is a house built by **cherry-picking** certain biblical stones while discarding others. It is not the house that the full biblical blueprint describes.

**Scripture References:** (This is a summary argument, referencing the entire body of Scripture. Key anti-TULIP texts include John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 6:4-6, and Exodus 32:33.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that the non-Calvinist view fails to do justice to the "hard sayings" of Scripture, particularly Romans 9, and that it ultimately elevates the will of man over the sovereignty of God. This argument, however, is based on a false dilemma. The biblical alternative to Calvinism is not Pelagianism (which elevates the will of man). The biblical alternative is a theology that holds God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the paradoxical tension that Scripture itself presents. It argues that the Calvinistic interpretation of the "hard sayings" is a misinterpretation that ignores their historical and covenantal context. The goal is not to diminish God's sovereignty, but to define it according to the full testimony of Scripture, which reveals a sovereignty that is exercised in a way that is consistent with God's other revealed attributes of love, justice, and truthfulness.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The TULIP framework is the definitive summary of the soteriology of **Calvinism**, as taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It was codified at the **Synod of Dort** (1619) as a direct response to the Five Articles of the Remonstrants (the followers of Arminius). While its roots are in the theology of **Augustine and Calvin**, the TULIP acronym itself is a later, more rigid expression of the system. The vast majority of Christendom, including **Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and the Arminian/Wesleyan/Anabaptist** traditions, has historically rejected this five-point system as an imbalanced and unbiblical formulation of the doctrine of salvation.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (The entire collection of proof texts for each of the five points.)

**Verses of Correction:** (The entire collection of verses that challenge each of the five points.)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** As a whole system, TULIP is built upon the **Begging the Question** fallacy (circular reasoning). The system's conclusion (that God unconditionally and deterministically saves the elect) is assumed in its interpretation of the evidence. Each point logically requires the others. You only need Limited Atonement if you have Unconditional Election. You only need Irresistible Grace if you have Total Inability. The system is a closed, circular loop that interprets the Bible through its own lens. The premise and the conclusion are the same, and the argument simply moves in a circle, using each point to prove the others.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that the truths of God must be reducible to a logically exhaustive and coherent human system. The TULIP framework is the pinnacle of theological rationalism. It is a beautiful, internally consistent, logical machine. Its primary weakness, however, is that it sacrifices the messy, paradoxical, and profoundly relational data of the biblical text for the sake of its own logical tidiness. The Bible is not a book of systematic theology; it is the story of God's relationship with humanity. The philosophical error is to prioritize

the creation of a neat system over a faithful submission to the full, and sometimes paradoxical, testimony of the text.

**Question 92. What are the most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible?**

**Answer 92. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain, untutored reading of the Bible arise where the system's logical deductions collide with the Bible's direct, relational statements about the **character of God and the nature of the gospel offer**. First, a plain reader would see the universal language of John 3:16 ("God so loved the world"), 1 Timothy 2:4 ("will have all men to be saved"), and 1 John 2:2 ("propitiation... for the sins of the whole world") and naturally conclude that God's love and Christ's atonement are for everyone. The system's doctrines of a selective love and a limited atonement are in stark tension with this. Second, a plain reader would hear the universal commands to "repent" and "choose life" and the "whosoever will" invitations and naturally conclude that a genuine choice is being offered. The system's doctrines of total inability and irresistible grace create a deep tension with this. Third, a plain reader would encounter the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about falling away and the possibility of being "cut off" or "blotted out" and naturally conclude that perseverance is a real and necessary condition of salvation. The system's doctrine of unconditional security is in direct tension with these warnings. In each case, the plain reading leads to a relational, dynamic, and conditional understanding, while the system requires a metaphysical, deterministic, and unconditional one.

**Scripture References:** (Universal Atonement) 1 John 2:2; (Universal Offer) Revelation 22:17; (Resistible Grace) Acts 7:51; (Conditional Security) Hebrews 6:4-6

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that the "plain reading" is a superficial reading that fails to account for the "deeper" truths of divine sovereignty found in passages like Romans 9. It is argued that the plain reading leads to contradictions (if God loves everyone, why aren't all saved?), and that the Calvinistic system, while more complex, is the only way to resolve these contradictions in a way that truly honors God's sovereignty. This argument, however, assumes that God's sovereignty must be defined in a deterministic way, and it dismisses the possibility that the Bible intentionally holds these truths in a paradoxical tension that our finite logic cannot fully resolve. It mistakes a philosophical tidiness for biblical truth.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** These points of tension are the historical dividing lines between **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** and the rest of Christendom. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, consistently prioritizes the logical deductions from the doctrine of meticulous sovereignty over the plain, relational statements of the biblical text. This has been the central critique of the system by **Arminians, Wesleyans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and the Eastern Orthodox** for centuries. They argue that Calvinism sacrifices the revealed character of God for the sake of a philosophical model of sovereignty.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (The standard proof texts for TULIP.)

**Verses of Correction:** (The standard counter-texts for TULIP.)



**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The defense of the Calvinistic system against the "plain reading" often commits the **Appeal to Motive** fallacy. It can subtly or overtly suggest that those who hold to the "plain reading" do so because of a sinful, humanistic desire to preserve their own autonomy or to create a God in their own image. It attacks the supposed motive of the opponent rather than engaging with the textual evidence they present. For example, "You only reject unconditional election because you want to take some of the credit for your salvation." This is a fallacious argument that avoids the hard work of exegesis by impugning the character of the interlocutor.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **a theological system should be judged by its internal logical consistency rather than its external correspondence to the full range of biblical data.** This is a philosophical position known as coherentism. The TULIP system is highly coherent; each point logically flows from the others. The problem is that this internally coherent system does not correspond well with all the data of the biblical text. The biblical worldview requires a correspondence theory of truth, where our beliefs must correspond to the reality revealed in the text, even if that reality is not as logically tidy or systematic as we would like.

### **Question 93. How does the "either-or logical fallacy" contribute to the debate between Calvinism and other theological systems?**

**Answer 93. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The "either-or logical fallacy," also known as the **False Dilemma**, is the very architectural foundation upon which the entire debate between Calvinism and other systems is built. The debate is almost always framed in a series of false dichotomies. You are forced to choose: **Either God is 100% sovereign, or man has free will.** Either salvation is 100% by God's grace, or it is by human works. Either believers are eternally secure, or they can lose their salvation at any moment. In each case, two positions are presented as the only exhaustive options, and the debaters retreat to their respective corners to defend one pole against the other. The Bible, however, consistently rejects these man-made, philosophical "either-ors" and presents a "both-and" reality. It teaches that God is 100% sovereign *and* that man is 100% responsible. It teaches that salvation is 100% by grace *and* that a genuine faith response is 100% necessary. It teaches that God's keeping power is absolute *and* that a believer must diligently persevere. The fallacy is in the framing of the question. By accepting the false choice, both sides are forced into imbalanced positions that must ignore or explain away a significant portion of the biblical evidence. The truly biblical position is to reject the false dilemma and to embrace the profound, paradoxical tension that the Scripture itself holds together.

**Scripture References:** Philippians 2:12-13 (A classic "both-and" passage: "work out your own salvation... For it is God which worketh in you")

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from both sides is that a "both-and" position is an illogical, irrational compromise. The staunch Calvinist will argue that if man has any decisive choice, God cannot be truly sovereign. The staunch Arminian will argue that if God is truly sovereign in a deterministic sense, man cannot have any meaningful choice. Both sides are committed to the idea that the relationship must be logically comprehensible and that one principle must have ultimate priority over the other. They are uncomfortable with a divine mystery that

transcends the law of non-contradiction as understood by finite human minds. They demand a logical tidiness that the Bible does not provide.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This fallacious "either-or" framing is the very engine of the historical debate between **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**. The entire controversy, which erupted in the early 17th century and was adjudicated at the **Synod of Dort**, was framed in these binary terms. This has created a polarized theological landscape in Protestantism for 400 years. Some traditions, like **Lutheranism**, have attempted to find a middle path (affirming monergism in conversion but allowing for the possibility of falling from grace), but the broader evangelical world is still largely defined by this Calvinist/Arminian dichotomy, which is itself based on a logical fallacy.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Each side uses its standard proof texts to defend its pole of the dichotomy.)

**Verses of Correction:** (Passages that hold both truths in tension, like Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, and Genesis 50:20.)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The **False Dilemma** is the central fallacy at play. It is the tactical error of presenting only two choices when more are available. It's like saying, "This car is either blue or red," when it is, in fact, purple. The biblical view of salvation is a rich, complex "purple" that combines the "blue" of divine sovereignty with the "red" of human responsibility. The fallacy is in refusing to see the color purple because you are dogmatically committed to a world that contains only blue and red.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **bivalence**, a principle of classical logic which states that every proposition is either true or false, and there is no third option. While this is a useful principle in formal logic, it can be misapplied to the complex, paradoxical, and personal truths of divine revelation. The Bible often presents truths that are not "either/or" but "both/and." The relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility may be one of these areas where our binary logic is insufficient to grasp the transcendent reality. The philosophical error is to insist that the reality of God must conform to the logical principle of bivalence.

**Question 94. What is the "story of the blind men and the elephant," and how does it illustrate the danger of building a theology on incomplete evidence?**

**Answer 94. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The ancient parable of the blind men and the elephant is a perfect illustration of the architectural folly of building a theological system on incomplete, "cherry-picked" evidence. In the story, a group of blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. One touches the leg and declares, "An elephant is like a tree." Another touches the trunk and insists, "No, it is like a snake." A third touches the tail and argues, "You are both wrong; it is like a rope." Each man is correct in his limited experience, but all of them are profoundly wrong in their overall conclusion because they have only grasped one part of the whole reality. This is precisely the error of systematic theologies like Calvinism. The Calvinist has firmly grasped one part of the elephant—the massive, strong leg of God's sovereignty—and has declared that the entire elephant is like a tree. He has built his entire system around this one, undeniable truth. In

doing so, however, he has missed the flexible trunk of God's universal offer, the guiding tail of God's moral law, and the hearing ears of God's responsiveness to prayer. A true, topical Bible study is the act of walking around the entire elephant, of patiently examining every part, and of humbly admitting that the whole is far greater and more complex than any one part would suggest.

**Scripture References:** (This is an illustrative parable, not a biblical doctrine.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** A proponent of a system might rebut this analogy by claiming that their chosen part of the elephant (e.g., sovereignty) is, in fact, the most important or foundational part, and that all the other parts must be understood in light of it. This is simply a restatement of their commitment to the cherry-picking fallacy. It is an assertion of a biased starting point, not an argument from the evidence as a whole. Another **rebuttal** might be that it is impossible for finite humans to grasp the whole elephant, so we must be content with our partial understanding. While it is true that we cannot fully comprehend God, this should lead to intellectual humility and a cautious, balanced approach, not to the arrogant construction of a comprehensive system based on one's own preferred part of the evidence.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** This parable illustrates the methodological error of virtually every rigid theological system. **Calvinism** focuses on sovereignty. **Arminianism** can focus so heavily on free will that it can seem to diminish God's power. Some **Pentecostal** and **Charismatic** groups can focus so intensely on the work of the Holy Spirit that they neglect sound doctrine and the centrality of the Word. **Liberal Christianity** can focus on the love of God to the exclusion of His holiness and justice. Each group has grasped a real truth, but has often mistaken that part for the whole, leading to an imbalanced and distorted theological system.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Illustrative parable)

**Verses of Correction:** (Illustrative parable)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The parable of the blind men and the elephant is a perfect illustration of the **Hasty Generalization** fallacy. This fallacy is committed when a conclusion is drawn about a whole group or concept based on an inadequate or biased sample. Each blind man makes a hasty generalization about the entire elephant based on his sample size of one part. In the same way, a theological system makes a hasty generalization about the entire character and plan of God based on a biased sample of texts that support its central premise.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **reductionism**. Reductionism is the philosophical approach that seeks to understand complex things by reducing them to the interactions of their simpler parts. While this is a powerful tool in the natural sciences, it can be a dangerous error when applied to personal and transcendent realities like God. A reductionist approach to God will always fail because God is not a complex machine that can be disassembled and understood. He is an infinite, personal being who must be known through relationship and revelation. The attempt to create a systematic theology is often a reductionist project, an attempt to make the infinite God of the Bible fit into the finite categories of a human system.



**Question 95. What is the central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation for humanity?**

**Answer 95. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The central, unifying architectural theme of the entire Bible, the great redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation, is that God, out of His infinite and unmerited love for a rebellious and fallen humanity, has executed a glorious plan to **reconcile all things to Himself through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.** This is not a story of a secret plan to rescue a few, but a cosmic plan to defeat sin, death, and Satan, and to create a new heavens and a new earth. The plan is introduced in seed form in the promise of Genesis 3:15, it is developed through the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, it is foretold in stunning detail by the prophets, it is accomplished in the historical events of Christ's incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection, it is proclaimed by the apostles to all nations, and it will be consummated in the triumphant return of Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. The gateway into this great salvation has always been the same: **by grace, through faith.** It is a plan that is vast enough to include "whosoever will," yet personal enough to call each of us by name. This grand, Christ-centered, universal offer of reconciliation is the scarlet thread that ties the entire biblical narrative together.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 3:15, John 3:16, Acts 4:12, Romans 5:8-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Galatians 4:4-5, Ephesians 1:7-10, Colossians 1:19-22, Hebrews 9:26-28, Revelation 21:1-5

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** There are few direct **rebuttals** to this central message, as it is the common confession of orthodox Christianity. The disagreements arise in the details of its application. A Calvinist would agree with this summary, but would add that God's plan also included the unconditional election of those who would be saved. An Arminian would agree, but would emphasize the role of free will in accepting the offer. A Roman Catholic would agree, but would add the instrumental role of the church and its sacraments. While these are significant differences, they are debates about the *application* of the plan, not about the central, Christ-centered nature of the plan itself. The unifying message is Christ, and it is in the details of how His salvation is applied that the divisions arise.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** While most churches would affirm this central message, the error comes when a denomination's particular distinctives are elevated to the same level of importance as the central message itself. For example, when a church like the **Seventh-day Adventists** makes the Sabbath a central, defining issue of the "everlasting gospel," or when a **Church of Christ** makes a specific mode of baptism the primary point of fellowship, they risk obscuring the central, unifying message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. The tragedy of denominationalism is the tendency to turn secondary issues into primary ones, creating walls where there should be fellowship.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (This is a summary of the central message of the entire Bible.)

**Verses of Correction:** (This is a summary of the central message of the entire Bible.)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The error of elevating a secondary doctrine to the level of a primary one is a form of the **Fallacy of Misplaced Emphasis.** It involves focusing on a minor or secondary

aspect of an issue while ignoring or downplaying the major and more important aspects. It's like a building inspector who writes a scathing report about a smudge on a window while completely ignoring the fact that the building's foundation is crumbling. Many theological debates are arguments about the smudges on the windows, while the great, central, unifying foundation of the gospel is neglected.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **sectarianism**. This is the philosophical and sociological tendency of human groups to define themselves by what makes them different from other groups. Denominations are often formed and maintained by emphasizing their unique "distinctives." This is a natural human tendency, but it is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, which seeks to break down walls of division. The biblical worldview is not sectarian; it is catholic (in the sense of "universal"). It calls us to find our primary identity not in our denominational distinctives, but in our shared union with Christ, which transcends all human labels.

**Question 96. How does a proper understanding of the Book of Life provide a key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance?**

**Answer 96. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A proper, architectural understanding of the biblical doctrine of the Book of Life provides a powerful and elegant key that unlocks the long-standing debate over election and perseverance. The critical insight, which is consistently ignored by deterministic systems, is that the Bible's primary emphasis is not on names being added to the book, but on the solemn possibility of names being **blotted out**. This single fact reframes the entire discussion. It suggests a model that is both gracious and conditional. **The Model:** God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, and based on the sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," wrote every name in His book from the beginning. This affirms a universal, gracious election and provision. However, a person's place in that book is not unconditional. It is maintained through a living, persevering faith in Christ. Through final, unrepentant sin and apostasy, a person can forfeit their place, and their name is then blotted out. This model perfectly harmonizes the Bible's teachings on God's sovereign initiative, His universal love, the security of the true believer, and the many solemn warnings about falling away. It resolves the debate not by choosing one set of verses over another, but by providing a framework in which both sets of verses can be understood in perfect harmony.

**Scripture References:** Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Luke 10:20

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is the "two books" theory, which posits that the "Book of Life" from which names can be blotted out is a temporary register of the living, while the "Lamb's Book of Life" is a separate, eternal, and unchangeable list of the elect. This distinction, however, is an artificial construct that is not explicitly made in Scripture. The Bible uses the terms in a way that suggests they are one and the same record of eternal salvation. The other **rebuttal** is that the warnings are hypothetical. As discussed before, this undermines the integrity of God's Word. The doctrine of the Book of Life, when taken at face value, provides a clear and powerful alternative to the rigidities of the Calvinistic system.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The doctrines of Unconditional Election and the Perseverance of the Saints are central pillars of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, requires the list of the saved to be eternally fixed and unchangeable. Therefore, the biblical doctrine of the Book of Life, with its clear teaching on the possibility of names being blotted out, presents a direct and severe challenge that must be neutralized by extra-biblical explanations like the "two books" theory. This stands in contrast to the view of many early church fathers and later **Anabaptists and Arminians**, who saw this doctrine as a clear support for conditional security.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8 (These are interpreted by Calvinists to mean the names of the elect were written, and the non-elect were not.)

**Verses of Correction:** Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The "two books" theory is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("the list of the saved is unchangeable") is contradicted by the evidence (names can be blotted out). To save the belief, a new, unsupported element is invented ("there must be a second, different book"). This new element is created "for this" specific purpose—to rescue the theory. It is an argument that lacks intellectual honesty because it refuses to allow the evidence to challenge the original belief and instead invents new conditions to protect it.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **static essentialism**. This philosophical view believes that things have a fixed, unchangeable essence. In this case, a person is either "elect" or "non-elect" in their essential being from eternity, and this status cannot change. The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life, however, operates on a more dynamic, **relational and covenantal** model. A person's standing before God is not a fixed, metaphysical property, but a living, relational state that must be maintained. The philosophical error is to impose a static, essentialist grid onto a dynamic, relational reality.

### **Question 97. What are the practical implications of adopting a Calvinistic worldview for one's personal relationship with God?**

**Answer 97. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** Adopting a Calvinistic worldview can have profound and often detrimental practical implications for a believer's personal relationship with God. While the system's intention may be to glorify God's sovereignty, its logical outworking can create a relationship characterized by **anxiety, distance, and a diminished sense of personal agency**. First, the doctrine of unconditional election can lead to a crippling lack of assurance. Instead of simply trusting in Christ's universal promises, the individual can be driven to an unhealthy, introspective search for the "marks" of their own election, forever asking, "Am I truly one of the chosen?" Second, the doctrine of reprobation can create a view of God that is terrifying and seemingly arbitrary, making it difficult to relate to Him as a consistently loving and trustworthy Father. How can one fully trust a God who may have created their neighbor or even their own child for the express purpose of damnation? Third, the doctrines of irresistible grace and perseverance can lead to a spiritual passivity, a sense that one's own striving, prayer, and diligent effort are ultimately not decisive. It can replace the dynamic, relational struggle of the Christian



walk with a more fatalistic sense of simply being carried along by an irresistible decree. While many Calvinists are devout and loving Christians, the internal logic of their system can create significant pastoral and relational problems.

**Scripture References:** (This question is about the practical implications of a system, not a specific doctrine derived from verses.)

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that these are misrepresentations or abuses of the system. It is argued that a "proper" understanding of Calvinism leads to the deepest humility, the greatest assurance (based on God's decree, not our feelings), and the most fervent holiness (out of gratitude). While it is true that the system can be held in a more balanced way, this **rebuttal** fails to account for the consistent historical and pastoral problems that have arisen from it. The intense struggles with assurance among the Puritans, for example, are a matter of historical record. The argument also fails to address the core logical and emotional difficulties of relating to a God who has unconditionally decreed the eternal torment of millions.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** These practical implications are a recurring theme in the history of **Calvinism**. The intense focus on introspection and the "marks of grace" was a hallmark of 17th-century **Puritanism** in England and America. The potential for a "cold" or "intellectual" faith, detached from passionate evangelism, has been a criticism leveled against some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. In contrast, the **Wesleyan** revival of the 18th century, with its emphasis on a universal atonement, a personal experience of the witness of the Spirit, and the possibility of a joyful assurance of salvation for all, was a direct and powerful reaction against what **John Wesley** saw as the pastoral dangers of the Calvinistic system.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Systemic argument)

**Verses of Correction:** (Systemic argument)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The defense of Calvinism against these practical critiques often commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The argument is, "No *true* Calvinist would lack assurance or be cold in their faith." When presented with historical or personal examples of Calvinists who do struggle with these issues, the response is, "Well, they must not have a *proper* or *balanced* understanding of the system." This fallacy protects the system from any practical critique by simply redefining the subject ("true Calvinist") to exclude all negative examples. It makes the system's practical benefits unfalsifiable.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **a theological system's logical coherence is more important than its relational and pastoral livability**. This is a rationalistic bias. The system is seen as a beautiful, logical machine, and if its operation causes some relational or emotional problems for the people inside it, then the problem is with the people, not with the machine. The biblical worldview, however, is profoundly pastoral and relational. Biblical doctrine is not given to us to build elegant, abstract systems, but to bring us into a living, healthy, and joyful relationship with the living God. A system that, in practice, often hinders that relationship should be viewed with great suspicion.

**Question 98. How can a topical Bible study method help to cut through the complexities and contradictions of different theological systems?**

**Answer 98. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** A topical Bible study method is the master architect's single most powerful tool for cutting through the dense forest of human theological systems and clearing a straight path to the truth of God's Word. Its power lies in its radical simplicity and its unwavering commitment to a single authority: the Bible itself. Instead of starting with a man-made system (like TULIP or the Westminster Confession) and then searching for verses to support it, the topical method begins with a blank slate. It asks a simple question: "What does the **entire Bible** have to say about this subject?" By gathering every relevant verse on a topic—grace, election, law, etc.—and laying them all out side-by-side, the student forces Scripture to interpret Scripture. This process naturally and automatically **exposes the imbalances and contradictions** of the man-made systems. It becomes immediately obvious when a system has been "cherry-picking" its evidence, because the verses that the system ignores are now sitting on the table, demanding to be heard. It bypasses centuries of confusing philosophical debate and denominational tradition, empowering any believer to build their convictions directly on the solid rock of the whole counsel of God, rather than the shifting sands of human reasoning.

**Scripture References:** Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Proverbs 2:1-6, Psalm 119:105

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** is that the topical method is simplistic and can be easily misused by the untrained layman to rip verses out of context. It is argued that a proper understanding requires the guidance of historical theology and the complex exegesis of trained scholars. While it is true that any method can be misused, the danger of taking verses out of context is far greater in a systematic approach that is actively searching for "proof texts" to support a preconceived idea. The topical method, when done honestly, actually *forces* verses into their broader context by placing them alongside all the other verses on the same topic. It is the best defense against a narrow, decontextualized reading. The claim that it is "simplistic" is not a weakness, but its greatest strength.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The topical Bible study method is a threat to any theological system that relies on a high degree of clerical or academic authority. **Roman Catholicism**, with its insistence on the Magisterium as the sole infallible interpreter of Scripture, would naturally oppose a method that empowers the laity to interpret for themselves. Similarly, highly academic forms of **Calvinism** or **Lutheranism**, which rely on a deep knowledge of historical confessions and systematic theology, can be suspicious of a method that seems to bypass this scholarly tradition. The method has been most at home in movements that emphasize the priesthood of all believers and the perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture, such as the **Anabaptist** tradition and many grassroots **evangelical** and **Bible church** movements.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (Methodological argument)

**Verses of Correction:** (Methodological argument)

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that the topical method is dangerous for the laity commits the **Appeal to Authority** fallacy (specifically, an appeal to an elite or expert authority). It argues that the method is flawed because it does not rely on the approved interpretations of a special class of people (scholars, theologians, clergy). It seeks to invalidate the method not by showing its inherent flaws, but by claiming that only the experts are qualified to interpret the Bible correctly. This is a form of spiritual elitism that is contrary to the Protestant principle of the perspicuity of Scripture.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **Gnosticism**. Gnosticism was an ancient heresy that taught that salvation comes through a secret, hidden knowledge (*gnosis*) that is only available to a select, initiated elite. The argument against the topical method is a form of soft Gnosticism. It implies that the "real" meaning of the Bible is not on the surface, accessible to any diligent reader, but is a hidden, complex meaning that can only be unlocked by the theological experts with their special tools and training. The biblical worldview, in contrast, is that the central, saving message of the Word of God is clear and accessible to all who will read it with a humble and open heart.

**Question 99. What is the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer, according to the Bible?**

**Answer 99. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** The ultimate source of the believer's assurance and hope is not an abstract philosophical decree or a fleeting subjective emotion, but the solid, architectural foundation of the **person and work of Jesus Christ**, as revealed in the promises of God's Word. Our hope is not anchored in the secret counsels of God's eternal election, nor is it anchored in the shifting sands of our own feelings or performance. It is anchored "within the veil," in the finished, atoning work of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Our assurance rests on the objective, external reality of His shed blood and His empty tomb. We have hope because He is our "merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17). We have assurance because of His unbreakable promises, such as "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). This objective foundation is then confirmed and made personal to us by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, who testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And it is demonstrated and strengthened by the external evidence of a life that is being transformed and is bearing the fruit of obedience. But the source, the anchor, the bedrock, is always Christ and His unchanging Word.

**Scripture References:** Hebrews 6:18-20, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 Peter 1:21, Titus 2:13, Romans 5:1-5, Romans 8:16, Colossians 1:27, 1 Timothy 1:1, 1 John 5:11-13

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** The primary **rebuttal** from the Calvinistic side is that a hope based on Christ's promises is not secure unless one knows for certain that those promises apply to them through an unconditional decree. They argue that without the foundation of unconditional election, our hope is ultimately resting on the instability of our own faith. This argument, however, misunderstands the nature of faith. Faith is not trust in our own ability to believe; it is trust in the object of our belief—Christ Himself. Our hope is not in the strength of our grip on the anchor, but in the unshakeable nature of the anchor to which we are holding. The Bible consistently directs our gaze outward to Christ, not inward to our own status or performance, as the source of our hope.



**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The basis of assurance is a key pastoral issue. **Calvinism** (**Reformed and Presbyterian** churches) can lead to a crisis of assurance by forcing the believer to look inward for the "marks" of their election. On the other extreme, some forms of "decision theology" common in **evangelical and Baptist** circles can create a false assurance based on a one-time prayer or decision, detached from the ongoing reality of a relationship with Christ. The most biblically balanced view, which anchors assurance in the objective work of Christ and His promises, is a hallmark of the **Lutheran** tradition and was also central to the teaching of the **Wesleyan** revival.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For decree-based hope) Romans 8:29-30; (For decision-based hope) John 5:24

**Verses of Correction:** Hebrews 6:19, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Timothy 1:1, Colossians 1:27, Romans 15:13

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument that hope must be based on an unconditional decree can be seen as a **Category Error**. It confuses the category of "source of hope" with the category of "cause of salvation." The ultimate cause of our salvation is the sovereign grace of God. But the biblical *source* of our ongoing hope and assurance is the person and promises of Christ, to whom we are called to look in faith. It's like a person rescued from a fire. The ultimate cause of their rescue was the fire department's decision to respond. But the ongoing source of their feeling of safety is the sight of the firefighter carrying them and the sound of his voice telling them they will be okay.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, which seeks a logically airtight, deductive certainty for assurance. It wants to be able to say, "God has unconditionally elected me (Premise A). God's election cannot fail (Premise B). Therefore, I am eternally secure (Conclusion C)." The Bible, however, presents assurance in more relational and empirical terms. It is the confidence that comes from trusting a person and seeing the evidence of that relationship in one's life. It is the certainty of a relationship, not the certainty of a syllogism.

**Question 100. How can we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) in a spirit of truth and love?**

**Answer 100. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV):** To "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" requires the believer to become a master architect who builds with both a mason's trowel and a soldier's sword in hand. It is a call to a dual commitment: a fierce, unwavering fidelity to **truth**, and a gentle, patient spirit of **love**. To contend in truth means we must first know the faith that was once delivered. This requires a diligent, topical study of the Scriptures, building our convictions on the whole counsel of God, not the shifting traditions of men. It means we must be willing to identify and expose error, to "mark them which cause divisions... contrary to the doctrine" (Romans 16:17), and to refuse to compromise on the essential, foundational truths of the gospel. However, to contend in love means that our defense of the truth must never be a vehicle for our own pride, arrogance, or contentiousness. The "servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). We are contending for a glorious truth about a gracious

Savior, and our demeanor must reflect the beauty of that truth. We speak the truth, but we speak it in love, always seeking the restoration of the erring and the salvation of the lost, not merely the victory of our own argument. It is this sacred balance of doctrinal integrity and gracious character that truly honors Christ and effectively contends for His faith.

**Scripture References:** Jude 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Ephesians 4:15, Romans 16:17, Titus 1:9, Philippians 1:27, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

**Anticipated Rebuttals:** One **rebuttal** comes from the compromiser, who argues that "contending" is inherently unloving and that the most important thing is unity, even at the expense of doctrinal truth. This is the error of a false ecumenism that sacrifices truth on the altar of peace. On the other extreme is the heresy hunter, who argues that love and gentleness are a form of compromise and that the truth must be proclaimed with harshness and unyielding severity. This is the error of a loveless orthodoxy that wins the argument but loses the soul. The biblical model rejects both extremes. Paul was a fierce contender who pronounced an anathema on false teachers, but he was also a loving pastor who wept for the souls of men.

**Churches Teaching Fallacies:** The error of a loveless contention is often found in some corners of **Independent Fundamental Baptist** and **hyper-Reformed** circles, where a pugnacious and divisive spirit can sometimes be mistaken for faithfulness. The opposite error of a truthless compromise is a hallmark of **liberal and progressive Christianity**, and is the driving force behind the modern **ecumenical movement**, which often seeks institutional unity without a shared foundation in the apostolic gospel. The historical figure who perhaps best embodied the biblical balance was the Apostle Paul himself, who could write the sharp, polemical rebukes of Galatians and the gentle, pastoral encouragements of Philippians.

**Verses of Apparent Support:** (For harshness) Galatians 1:8, Titus 1:13; (For compromise) John 17:21, Romans 14:1

**Verses of Correction:** 2 Timothy 2:24-25, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

**Logical Fallacy Analysis:** The argument of the harsh contender often commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents only two options: either you are a hard, uncompromising defender of the truth, or you are a soft, effeminate compromiser. It fails to see the biblical third option: the gentle warrior, the meek instructor, the one who speaks the truth in love. The argument of the compromiser also commits a **False Dilemma**: either you have institutional unity, or you have divisive doctrinal strife. It fails to see the possibility of a spiritual unity that is based on a shared commitment to the truth, even without institutional agreement on every secondary issue.

**Philosophical Fallacy Exposure:** The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views truth and love as being in opposition to each other**. The harsh contender believes that love must be sacrificed for the sake of truth. The compromiser believes that truth must be sacrificed for the sake of love. This is a false philosophical dichotomy. The biblical worldview is that truth and love are inextricably linked. God is both truth and love. Jesus was "full of grace and truth." To speak the truth without love is to misrepresent the God of

love. To show a "love" that is indifferent to truth is to misrepresent the God of truth. The Christian is called to hold these two divine attributes together in their character and their ministry.



## **Part III: Why KJV, Topical Study, and House Churches?**

### **A Pillar of Truth: Why We Use the King James Version.**

In the pursuit of sound biblical doctrine, the choice of a Bible translation is not a matter of mere preference, but a foundational decision that shapes every conclusion that follows. While we acknowledge that the core message of the gospel can be found in many translations and that sincere believers use a variety of versions, for the work of rigorous, systematic, and harmonized topical Bible study, a single, stable, and textually complete standard is not just helpful—it is essential. Our choice of the King James Version is not born from a rigid, unthinking traditionalism, but from a careful examination of the evidence, a commitment to textual integrity, and the methodological necessity of a consistent foundation.

The purpose of this article is to lay out the factual, evidence-based reasons for using the KJV as the authoritative standard for doctrinal study. This is not an argument intended to condemn those who use other translations, but rather to provide a clear, logical explanation for why the textual basis of the KJV provides a superior foundation for discovering and harmonizing the whole counsel of God. The issue at hand is far deeper than archaic language versus modern English; it is about two fundamentally different streams of manuscripts that result in two different Bibles.

#### **The Problem of Two Testaments**

At the heart of the Bible translation debate lies a fact that is often overlooked by the average churchgoer: most modern translations, such as the New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), and New American Standard Bible (NASB), are not simply updates of the KJV's language. They are translations of a different Greek New Testament, one derived from a small and localized family of manuscripts known as the Alexandrian text-type. The King James Version, in contrast, was translated from a different family of manuscripts known as the Byzantine text-type, or the Textus Receptus (Received Text).

This divergence is the source of thousands of differences between the KJV and modern versions. These are not minor grammatical clarifications; they include the omission of words, phrases, and in some cases, entire verses. When a doctrine is built through topical study, gathering every verse on a subject, the absence of even a single "witness" can alter the final conclusion. Therefore, the question is not "Which translation is easier to read?" but "Which translation is based on the most complete and reliable manuscript evidence?" To answer this, we must examine the two streams of transmission.

#### **The Alexandrian Stream: A Troubled Minority**

The Alexandrian text-type is named for its geographical origin in Alexandria, Egypt, a known center for philosophical and allegorical interpretation of Scripture in the early centuries. This textual family is primarily represented by two key manuscripts: Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, which date to the 4th century. The guiding philosophy of modern textual criticism, which produces the Greek text underlying most modern translations, is largely that "the oldest

manuscripts are the best" and "the shorter reading is to be preferred." This philosophy elevates these two manuscripts above all others.

However, a closer examination reveals significant problems with this foundation. While Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are old, they were largely unknown and unused by the church for over 1,500 years. They were discovered in the 19th century and immediately promoted as superior, despite their history of obscurity. Furthermore, they are themselves filled with a staggering number of corrections, with thousands of places where scribes have altered the text. Most critically, they frequently disagree not only with the vast majority of other manuscripts but also with each other.

This Alexandrian stream represents a tiny fraction—less than 10%—of the over 5,800 existing Greek manuscripts. To accept it as the most reliable text is to believe that God allowed the true words of Scripture to be lost to the church for centuries, preserved only in a few flawed manuscripts in Egypt, while the vast majority of Bibles used by believers everywhere were based on a corrupted text. This view strains credulity and stands in tension with the doctrine of God's providential preservation of His Word.

### **The Byzantine Stream: The Text of the Universal Church**

In stark contrast stands the Byzantine text-type, the foundation for the Textus Receptus and the King James Version. This is not the text of a single region but the text used universally by the Greek-speaking church throughout the Byzantine Empire and beyond for over a millennium. It is represented in over 90% of all existing Greek manuscripts.

This overwhelming numerical superiority is what is known as the "Majority Text." The sheer volume and geographical spread of these manuscripts, from Asia Minor to Constantinople, testify to their widespread acceptance and use by the church. The logic is simple: the readings that were most common and accepted by the majority of churches in the majority of places for the majority of Christian history are the most likely to be the original words. This is not an argument from democracy, but from providence. It is the belief that God preserved His Word not by hiding it in a monastery library, but through His people in the living, breathing, and copying tradition of the church.

This stream of transmission provides a stable, consistent text that was recognized, preached from, and passed down through generations. It did not require a dramatic 19th-century discovery to be restored; it was already in the hands of God's people.

### **The Decisive Witness: The Early Church Fathers**

If the debate were merely between a few old manuscripts and thousands of later ones, it might remain a technical stalemate. However, there is a third line of evidence that serves as a powerful tie-breaker: the writings of the early Church Fathers.

Before the 4th century, when Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were penned, early Christian leaders like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen wrote extensive commentaries, letters,

and theological works. In these writings, they quoted the New Testament so profusely that the entire text could be substantially reconstructed from their quotations alone.

When we examine these early quotations, we find that they overwhelmingly support the readings found in the Byzantine text-type and the King James Version. Verses and phrases that are missing from the Alexandrian manuscripts are present and quoted as Scripture by these early writers, who were writing centuries before our "oldest" complete manuscripts were created. This demonstrates that the longer readings of the KJV are not later additions, as modern textual critics claim, but were part of the text from the very beginning. This historical witness provides a crucial external check, confirming that the Textus Receptus reflects a more ancient and complete form of the New Testament text.

### **Doctrinal Consequences: The Weight of Missing Words**

The differences between these two textual streams are not merely academic. They have profound and direct consequences on foundational Christian doctrines. A topical Bible study is only as reliable as the text it is studying. When key verses are removed, the doctrinal equation is altered. Consider a few of the most significant examples:

**The Deity of Christ and the Godhead:** In **1 Timothy 3:16**, the KJV reads, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh...**" This is a powerful and direct statement of the incarnation. The Alexandrian text, however, alters the word "God" to "He who," rendering the verse, "He who was manifest in the flesh." This subtle change removes one of the clearest declarations of Christ's deity.

Similarly, **1 John 5:7** in the KJV provides the most explicit statement of the Trinity in the entire Bible: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This verse, known as the Johannine Comma, is absent from all modern translations based on the Alexandrian text. While the doctrine of the Trinity can be constructed from other passages, the removal of its clearest and most concise definition is a significant loss that weakens the biblical case and aids those who deny this essential doctrine.

**The Atonement and the Blood of Christ:** In **Colossians 1:14**, the KJV reads, "In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, even the forgiveness of sins." Modern versions, following the Alexandrian text, omit the phrase "through his blood." This detaches the concept of redemption from its necessary foundation: the literal, physical, atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The blood is central to the doctrine of atonement, and its removal, even in one verse, is a step toward a more abstract and less offensive gospel.

**Salvation and Confession:** The account of the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion in Acts 8 is a model of gospel response. In the KJV, **Acts 8:37** contains a crucial exchange: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This entire verse, which links baptism directly to a clear, verbal confession of faith, is missing from modern translations. Its removal severs the explicit connection between belief, confession, and the ordinance of baptism in this foundational narrative.



**Prayer and God's Sovereignty:** The Lord's Prayer in **Matthew 6:13** concludes in the KJV with the powerful doxology: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." This declaration of God's eternal sovereignty is completely removed in modern versions. This changes the focus of the prayer, ending it on our plea for deliverance from evil rather than on God's ultimate authority and glory.

These are but a few of hundreds of such examples. When viewed cumulatively, the pattern is undeniable: the Alexandrian text consistently weakens doctrines related to the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, the necessity of confession, and the authority of Scripture.

### **The Methodological Imperative of a Single Standard**

For the topical Bible student, the goal is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, to build doctrine upon the harmonious testimony of every relevant verse. This method is rendered impossible if the very text being studied is unstable. Attempting to harmonize verses from a KJV and an NIV on a given topic is like trying to solve an equation where the variables keep changing. One version will contain a witness that the other lacks, leading to confusion and contradiction.

A single, unchanging, textually complete standard is required for this method to work. The King James Version, based on the stable and historically dominant Majority Text, provides that standard. It allows us to build our understanding on a firm foundation, confident that we are working with the full counsel of God as it has been preserved and passed down through the ages.

### **Answering the Objections**

Common arguments are often raised against the use of the KJV, but they falter under scrutiny.

- **"The KJV's language is too difficult."** While the Elizabethan English requires some adjustment, it is a rich, precise, and reverent language. The perceived difficulty is often overstated, and the small effort required to understand it is a worthy investment for access to a more complete text. It is better to wrestle with a difficult phrase that is present than to easily read a sentence from which God's words have been removed.
- **"The KJV translators didn't have the oldest manuscripts."** This is a red herring. As shown, the *readings* of the KJV are often far older than the Alexandrian manuscripts, attested by the early Church Fathers and ancient versions like the Peshitta. The "oldest" manuscripts are not necessarily the "best," especially when they are so filled with errors and were rejected by the church for centuries.
- **"We are more advanced in scholarship today."** Modern scholarship is not inherently superior; it is simply different. The textual criticism that produces modern versions is based on a philosophical presupposition that favors the Alexandrian text. The translators of the KJV were master linguists and scholars who held a high view of God's providential preservation of Scripture, a view that led them to trust the text that the church had trusted for centuries.

## **Conclusion: Holding Fast to the Words of God**

Our use of the King James Version is a deliberate choice rooted in the evidence of the manuscripts, the testimony of the early church, and the demands of doctrinal integrity. We believe that God has preserved His Word, not in a few obscure manuscripts discovered in the modern era, but in the great stream of texts that have been faithfully used by His people throughout history.

The King James Version is the inheritor of that faithful stream. Its text is more complete, its doctrinal witness is clearer, and its foundation is more secure. In a world of shifting opinions and theological fads, it stands as a pillar of truth, providing the steadfast and reliable Word of God necessary for those who would "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We do not worship the translation, but we honor the complete and preserved text from which it is derived, and we use it with confidence as we seek to understand and obey the very words of God.

## Why Topical Study is True *Sola Scriptura*.

In the pursuit of biblical truth, the method one employs is not merely a matter of academic preference; it is the very framework that determines the outcome. For centuries, the Christian world has been fractured into thousands of denominations, each claiming fealty to the same Bible, yet arriving at vastly different and often contradictory conclusions. This division is not an indictment of the Scriptures, but of the flawed human systems designed to interpret them. The prevailing method taught in virtually every seminary and preached from most pulpits is **Expository Preaching**. It presents itself as a deep, scholarly dive into the text. However, a closer examination reveals it to be a system that, by its very nature, fosters dependency, encourages selectivity, and perpetuates the very divisions it claims to abhor.

In stark contrast stands the **Topical Bible Study Method**, a radically simple yet profoundly effective approach that embodies the true spirit of *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone. This article will deconstruct the systemic flaws of the expository model and demonstrate why the topical method is the only path that allows the Bible to be its own interpreter, empowering every believer to discover the harmonious, unified truth of God's Word for themselves. We will also demonstrate that the single most crucial rule of biblical interpretation has been conspicuously omitted from the hermeneutical training of every Bible university in the world.

### The Expository Method: A Flawed Foundation of Human Authority

Expository preaching is often visualized as a surgeon standing over a single verse or a short passage of Scripture. With the scalpel of hermeneutics—the academic rules of interpretation—and the specialized tools of Greek and Hebrew lexicons, the expositor meticulously dissects the text. The process appears rigorous, intellectual, and authoritative. The preacher delves into the original languages, explores historical context, and presents a conclusion that seems unassailable to the congregation. The problem is that the entire procedure is built upon a foundation of sand.

### The Illusion of Objective Scholarship

The core issue with the expository method is its reliance on external human authorities masquerading as objective tools. Every Bible college and seminary is founded upon a specific systematic theology—a philosophical framework built by post-canonical figures like Augustine, Calvin, Wesley, or others. The hermeneutics taught within these institutions are not neutral; they are designed to lead the student to conclusions that align with the institution's foundational philosophy. The minister is trained not just to read the Bible, but to see it through the prism of their denomination's tradition.

This bias extends to the very tools they use. Consider the world of Greek and Hebrew lexicons. A pastor might invest in expensive Bible software like Logos, which can cost upwards of \$25,000 for a complete library. This software provides an exhaustive collection of commentaries and dictionaries. However, this vast library is not a monolith of truth. Instead, it contains resources that support virtually every major Christian tradition. There are lexicons favored by Calvinists, different ones favored by Arminians, and still others used by Catholics.



This creates a scenario where two PhD-level theologians from opposing denominations can follow the exact same rules of hermeneutics, practice the exact same method of expository preaching, and use the "authoritative" lexicons of their tradition to arrive at diametrically opposed interpretations of the very same verse. Both will claim the "original Greek" supports their view. Both will have an army of scholars and a library of reference works to back them up. The Apostle Paul warned of those who create "strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings" (1 Timothy 6:4). This is the inevitable result of the expository method. It is an unwinnable debate built on circular reasoning, where the conclusion is predetermined by the choice of tools. As Martin Luther observed at the Diet of Worms, the church fathers, councils, and scholars all contradicted one another, making them an unreliable path to truth.

### **The Creation of a Clerical Elite**

A devastating consequence of this method is the disempowerment of the laity. The average believer does not have a seminary education, cannot read Greek or Hebrew, and does not own a \$25,000 library of theological resources. They are therefore completely dependent on the "expositor" to tell them what the Bible *really* means. They must take the pastor's interpretation on faith. This creates a priestly class, a group of "masters" and "rabbis" who hold the keys to understanding—a direct violation of the command of Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:8-10.

The believer is reduced to a passive recipient of information, unable to verify the claims being made from the pulpit. They are taught to trust the credentials of the man, not the plain reading of the Word. This is not freedom in Christ; it is intellectual and spiritual bondage to a human system. The church becomes dependent on the interpreter, unable to understand the Scriptures without him.

### **The Inherent Danger of "Cherry-Picking"**

The most fundamental flaw in the expository method is its tunnel vision. By focusing intensely on a single verse or a small passage, the preacher is, by definition, ignoring the vast majority of other verses on the same subject. This is the very essence of "cherry-picking." A doctrine can be constructed from one or two verses that, when isolated, seem to support a particular idea. However, that idea may crumble when confronted with the thirty or forty other verses the Bible contains on that topic.

This is precisely how heresy is born. A popular doctrine may be supported by a handful of verses, while directly contradicting dozens of others. The expository method, by its very design, facilitates this error. It trains the preacher to build a case from a small sample of evidence while claiming that this microscopic focus is the only true way to honor the "context." In reality, the ultimate context of any verse is the entirety of Scripture itself. By failing to consult the whole counsel of God on a topic, the expositor risks presenting a distorted and incomplete truth.

### **The Topical Method: The True Practice of Sola Scriptura**

If the expository method is a flawed system that filters the Bible through human tradition, what is the alternative? The Topical Bible Study Method is the restoration of a simple, powerful, and

biblically sound approach that places the authority back where it belongs: on the Word of God alone. It is built on three simple, non-negotiable rules.

### **Rule #1: Do Not Start With Preconceived Ideas**

The first step is the most crucial: the student must consciously lay aside every external authority. This includes the opinions of the Church Fathers, the decrees of Church Councils, the writings of the Reformers, the confessions of denominations, the sermons of modern preachers, and, most importantly, one's own personal opinions. The goal is to approach the Bible with a clean slate, ready to receive whatever it teaches, unfiltered by the prisms of Catholic or Protestant tradition. We must be willing to let God be true, though every man a liar (Romans 3:4).

### **Rule #2: Find EVERY Verse in the Bible On the Topic**

This is the non-negotiable heart of the method, and it is the single most important rule of interpretation—a rule that is catastrophically absent from the hermeneutical systems taught in every seminary and Bible university in the world. Before any conclusion can be drawn, the student must gather the complete dataset. Using public-domain tools like a concordance, Nave's Topical Bible, or the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, one must compile a list of every single verse in the King James Bible that addresses the topic at hand.

Typically, this will result in a list of 30 to 40 verses. This single step immediately demolishes the danger of cherry-picking. It is impossible to build a doctrine on an isolated text when you are forced to confront every other witness in Scripture. This is the principle of letting the Bible interpret itself in its fullest sense. You are not asking what one verse means in isolation; you are asking what the entire Bible says in unison.

### **Rule #3: Believe Whatever the Bible Teaches**

Once the complete list of verses is assembled, the path to truth becomes remarkably clear. The process is as follows:

1. **Start with the Simple Verses:** Read through the entire list and identify the verses that are plain, simple, and easy to understand. These are passages a child could comprehend without needing an interpreter. These simple verses form the bedrock of the doctrine.
2. **Observe the Overwhelming Harmony:** The student will quickly discover that the vast majority of the verses—usually at least 95%—are in perfect harmony. They teach the same truth consistently and without contradiction. This overwhelming consensus is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the totality of Scripture.
3. **Use the Simple to Interpret the Complex:** In any list of 30-40 verses, there may be one or two that appear to teach something different or are difficult to understand. These are the verses that expositors often isolate to build novel doctrines. In the topical method, however, these complex verses are never the starting point. They are addressed last, and they must be interpreted in a way that harmonizes with the clear, simple teaching of the overwhelming majority. The Bible itself becomes the commentary for its own difficult passages.

This process eliminates confusion. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). The confusion that plagues Christianity is a product of human systems that elevate complex verses over simple ones and pit isolated texts against the weight of biblical testimony. When the whole counsel of God is examined, a beautiful and unshakable harmony emerges.

## A Tale of Two Methods: A Direct Comparison

The chasm between these two approaches could not be wider. Let us place them side-by-side:

| Feature                               | Expository Preaching                                            | Topical Bible Study                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Basis of Doctrine</b>              | A single verse or short passage.                                | <b>EVERY</b> verse in the Bible on the topic.           |
| <b>Primary Tools</b>                  | Human philosophy, biased lexicons, seminary hermeneutics.       | The King James Bible and a concordance.                 |
| <b>Source of Authority</b>            | The education and credentials of the "expositor."               | The plain, harmonious testimony of Scripture.           |
| <b>Role of the Believer</b>           | A dependent, passive listener.                                  | An empowered, independent student.                      |
| <b>Accessibility</b>                  | Requires advanced education and expensive resources.            | Accessible to anyone with an 8th-grade reading level.   |
| <b>Outcome</b>                        | Strife over words, contradiction, and denominational division.  | Doctrinal harmony, clarity, and unity in the truth.     |
| <b>Claim to <i>Sola Scriptura</i></b> | A counterfeit claim, as it relies on human tradition and tools. | The true and consistent application of Scripture alone. |

## Conclusion: The Freedom of Truth

The choice between the expository and topical methods is a choice between two masters: human tradition or the Word of God. The expository model, with its scholarly veneer, has created a system of dependence that has fractured the body of Christ and placed the Bible just out of reach of the common person. It is a system that, for all its complexity, has failed to produce the unity of the faith.

The Topical Bible Study Method is a return to the power and simplicity of the Scriptures. It is a declaration of independence from the clerical elite and the confusing traditions of men. It is the humble admission that we do not need a new pope, a new prophet, or a new PhD to tell us what God has already said plainly in His Word. We need only to lay aside our biases, gather all the evidence, and believe what the Bible says.

This is the path to knowing the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). It is the work of a Berean, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). It is the duty and the privilege of every believer. We must reject the scalpel that dissects and divides, and instead embrace the whole counsel of God, which builds, unifies, and brings peace.



# The Modern Institutional Church — Sacred or Pagan?

## A Note to the Reader

The following chapters are a brief examination of the historical roots of several common church practices, inspired by the groundbreaking research found in *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* by Frank Viola and George Barna. We are indebted to their work and highly encourage every believer to purchase a copy of their book. It is an invaluable resource, not least for its extensive bibliography, which provides the historical and scholarly sources necessary for a thorough investigation of these topics.

Our purpose here is not to condemn any individual or group, but to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3). We must, as the Bereans did, search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11). The question before us is simple: Are our practices rooted in the commandments of God as revealed in the New Testament, or are they the traditions of men, which make the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7:13)?

Let us proceed with a sober mind, allowing the Word of God to be our sole and final authority.

## 1: The Sacred Building

**Modern Practice:** The vast majority of Christians today gather for worship in a dedicated building, often referred to as a "church," "sanctuary," or "house of God." These structures are typically the most prominent and expensive assets of a congregation. They are considered sacred spaces, set apart for religious activities.

**Historical Origin:** Where does this practice originate? A topical study of the New Testament reveals that the first-century church had no such buildings. They met primarily in homes.

- **Acts 2:46:** "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread **from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"
- **Romans 16:5:** "Likewise greet **the church that is in their house.**"
- **Colossians 4:15:** "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and **the church which is in his house.**"
- **Philemon 1:2:** "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to **the church in thy house:**"

The concept of a sacred building for worship is foreign to the New Testament. The scriptures teach that the **people** are the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19), and the church is the body of Christ, not a physical location.

So, when did this change? Historical records show that the practice of constructing special buildings for Christian worship began after the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine in

the **4th century A.D.** Before this time, Christians were a persecuted minority and met secretly in homes. After Constantine legitimized Christianity, the church began to absorb Roman and pagan customs. The architectural form of the first church buildings was not unique but was borrowed directly from the Roman **basilica**, a common government building. The idea of a "sacred space" was adopted from pagan temples. This shift fundamentally altered the nature of the church from a living, organic community into a static, location-based institution.

**Logical Fallacy:** The primary fallacy at play is the **Appeal to Tradition**. The assumption is that because Christians have been meeting in special buildings for centuries, it must be the correct and biblical way. However, tradition does not establish truth. The Word of God is the only standard. By elevating a post-biblical tradition to the level of a divine requirement, we have burdened the church with immense financial and administrative overhead that has no basis in the New Testament.

## 2: The Order of Worship

**Modern Practice:** A typical church service follows a predictable, structured format. It is an event led from the front by a select few (pastor, worship leader) while the majority of the congregation observes passively. This "order of worship" or liturgy usually consists of a few songs, announcements, an offering, and culminates in a monologue sermon.

**Historical Origin:** This rigid, performance-based structure is not found in the early church. The New Testament describes a gathering that was open, participatory, and mutually edifying, where every member was expected to contribute as the Spirit led.

- **1 Corinthians 14:26:** "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, **every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.** Let all things be done unto edifying."

This was not a spectator event. It was an open meeting where the members of the body of Christ ministered to one another. The modern, stereotyped order of service has its roots not in the New Testament, but in the **medieval Catholic Mass**, which itself was influenced by the formal, scripted rituals of Greco-Roman court ceremonies. The Protestant Reformers, while correcting significant doctrinal errors, largely retained the Catholic liturgy and its passive structure. This tradition was solidified and passed down to the present day.

**Logical Fallacy:** This practice is built upon a **False Dilemma**, suggesting that the only options for a church meeting are either the rigid, formal liturgy we have inherited or chaotic, disorderly confusion. Scripture presents a third way: a meeting that is both Spirit-led and orderly ("Let all things be done decently and in order," 1 Corinthians 14:40), where the body is built up through the active participation of all its members, not the performance of a few. The modern order of worship effectively silences the body and quenches the Spirit, contrary to the explicit instruction of scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

## 3: The Sermon

**Modern Practice:** The centerpiece of the modern Protestant service is the sermon. It is a monologue delivered by a single individual, the pastor, who stands in a position of authority (often on a raised platform or pulpit) and speaks to a passive audience. For many, "going to church" is synonymous with "hearing a sermon."

**Historical Origin:** The idea of a polished, rhetorical monologue being the primary means of spiritual instruction is not a New Testament concept. While the apostles and elders certainly taught, the context was often dialogical and interactive. The modern sermon finds its true ancestor in the **Greco-Roman tradition of rhetoric**.

In the ancient world, sophists and orators were professional speakers, revered for their ability to deliver eloquent and persuasive speeches. Early church fathers, particularly those educated in this tradition like Chrysostom and Augustine, began to incorporate this style of oratory into Christian gatherings around the **4th and 5th centuries**. This elevated one man's gift of speaking above all other gifts and transformed the nature of teaching from a shared, communal activity into a professional performance.

The New Testament model was different. Teaching was a function shared among elders and other gifted members. The emphasis was on dialogue, questions, and mutual exhortation.

- **Acts 20:7:** "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and **continued his speech until midnight**." The Greek word used here for "preached" is *dialegomai*, from which we get our word "dialogue." It implies a discourse or discussion, not an uninterrupted monologue.

**Logical Fallacy:** The modern sermon is upheld by an **Appeal to Authority** and creates a **Clergy/Laity Divide** that is unbiblical. It establishes one man as the primary, authoritative teacher, placing the congregation in a perpetual state of spiritual infancy. This system discourages personal study and the exercise of spiritual gifts among the congregation. It contradicts the New Testament teaching on the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) and the instruction that leadership's role is to **equip the saints for the work of the ministry** (Ephesians 4:11-12), not to perform the ministry for them.

## 4: The Pastor

**Modern Practice:** The modern church is typically led by a single, professional "Pastor." This individual holds a formal title, has specialized theological training, is paid a salary, and functions as the chief executive, primary teacher, and spiritual head of the congregation. The office of "the Pastor" is seen as the highest and most essential role in the local church.

**Historical Origin:** A topical study of the New Testament reveals no such office. The word "pastor" (Greek: *poimen*, meaning shepherd) appears only once as a role in the church (Ephesians 4:11), listed alongside apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers as a gift for equipping the saints. It was never used as a formal title for a single leader of a congregation.



Instead, the New Testament model of church leadership was always **plural and non-hierarchical**. Local churches were overseen by a group of men called "elders" (*presbuteros*) or "overseers/bishops" (*episkopos*). These terms were used interchangeably.

- **Acts 20:17, 28:** Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church." He then tells these same men, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**..."
- **Titus 1:5, 7:** Paul instructs Titus to "ordain **elders** in every city," and then immediately describes the qualifications for this role by saying, "For a **bishop** must be blameless..."

The shift from plural eldership to a single ruling bishop began to emerge in the early **2nd century A.D.**, advocated by figures like Ignatius of Antioch. This move mirrored the hierarchical structure of the Roman government and the Greco-Roman model of the single, charismatic orator-leader. Over time, this single bishop evolved into the modern "Pastor," a role that combines the functions of administrator, orator, and chief officer—a position that has no precedent in the New Testament church.

**Logical Fallacy:** This practice is rooted in the **Fallacy of the Single Cause** and an **Appeal to Authority**. It wrongly attributes the health and direction of an entire congregation to the performance of one man, ignoring the biblical model of shared leadership and the ministry of the whole body. It creates a dependency on a human figure, in direct violation of Christ's command to call no man master or father on earth (Matthew 23:8-10).

## 5: Sunday Morning Costumes

**Modern Practice:** For many, attending a Sunday church service involves "dressing up" in one's "Sunday best." This often means formal attire—suits and ties for men, dresses for women—that is distinct from everyday wear. In many denominations, the clergy also wear special garments, such as robes, collars, or stoles, to distinguish them from the congregation.

**Historical Origin:** The New Testament makes no distinction in dress for believers gathering together. The early Christians, meeting in homes, came as they were. In fact, the Apostle James explicitly warns against showing partiality based on clothing.

- **James 2:2-4:** "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"

The practice of wearing special attire for religious functions has two primary historical roots. First, it mirrors the **Old Testament priestly garments**, which were part of a covenant that has been fulfilled and abolished in Christ. Second, it was adopted from the formal wear of **Roman officials in the 4th century**. When Christianity became the state religion, clergy began to adopt the dress of secular dignitaries to signify their new social status. The idea of the laity "dressing up" was a

later development, particularly in the Victorian era, tied to social class and the idea of showing reverence by wearing one's finest.

**Logical Fallacy:** This practice is a form of **Will-Worship** (Colossians 2:23) and **Special Pleading**. It is a human-invented tradition intended to demonstrate reverence, but it has no scriptural command. It creates an artificial standard of holiness based on outward appearance, which can lead to pride and judgment, the very things James warned against. It places a burden on the poor and creates a stumbling block for those who do not own "proper" attire, subtly communicating that the gathering is for a certain class of people.

## 6: Salaried Ministers and Tithing

**Modern Practice:** The financial engine of the modern church is the tithe, understood as the mandatory giving of ten percent of one's income. These funds are primarily used to pay the salaries of the pastor and staff, and to maintain the church building and its programs. The professional, salaried minister is the norm.

**Historical Origin:** This entire system is post-biblical. The concept of a paid, professional clergy class emerged gradually after the apostolic age. Paul, the apostle, explicitly refused to take payment for his preaching, working as a tentmaker to support himself so that he could make the gospel free of charge.

- **Acts 20:33-34:** "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that **these hands have ministered unto my necessities**, and to them that were with me."
- **1 Corinthians 9:18:** "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the **gospel of Christ without charge**, that I abuse not my power in the gospel."

Giving in the New Testament was voluntary, joyful, and directed toward the needs of the poor, the widows, the orphans, and traveling apostles—not for institutional salaries or building maintenance.

- **2 Corinthians 9:7:** "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; **not grudgingly, or of necessity**: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Tithing was an Old Testament law, a tax to support the Levitical priesthood and the national temple system. It was never commanded for the New Testament church. The practice was first re-instituted by a synod in France in **585 A.D.** and was not widely established until the **8th century**. It was introduced to support the growing institutional church and its professional clergy class, a system that had no footing in the early church.

**Logical Fallacy:** The modern practice of tithing is a **Category Error** and a form of **Legalism**. It wrongly applies an Old Covenant law to New Covenant believers, ignoring the clear biblical distinction between the two. It changes the nature of giving from a joyful, voluntary act of love into a compulsory tax, a "necessity," which Paul directly contradicts. This system financially

enables the unbiblical positions of the single pastor and the sacred building, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of man-made tradition.

## 7: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

**Modern Practice:** In most churches today, baptism and the Lord's Supper are treated as infrequent, highly ritualized ceremonies. They are typically administered by an ordained clergy member in the context of a formal church service. The Lord's Supper, often called "communion," has been reduced to a small wafer or piece of bread and a tiny cup of juice, consumed in a somber, individualistic manner. Baptism is often delayed, sometimes for months or years after a person professes faith.

**Historical Origin:** This formal, ritualistic approach is a significant departure from the practices of the early church. In the New Testament, these were organic, communal, and frequent events.

**Baptism** was the immediate response to faith and repentance. There was no waiting period, no class to attend, no board to approve. When a person believed the gospel, they were baptized at once.

- **Acts 2:41:** "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and **the same day** there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
- **Acts 8:36-38:** As the Ethiopian eunuch heard the gospel from Philip, he said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?... and he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

The **Lord's Supper** was originally a full, shared meal, known as an "Agape Feast" or "Love Feast." It was a joyful, communal meal where believers ate together in homes, and in the context of that meal, they would remember the Lord's death with bread and wine.

- **1 Corinthians 11:20-21, 33:** Paul rebukes the Corinthians not for their doctrine, but for their selfish practice: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken... Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." Paul's instruction assumes they are coming together for an actual meal.
- **Jude 1:12:** Peter warns of false teachers who are "spots in your **feasts of charity**, when they feast with you..."

The transformation of these practices into formal religious rites began in the **2nd and 3rd centuries**, as the church moved from homes to buildings and from shared leadership to a single bishop. The meal was gradually separated from the symbolic bread and wine, which then became a sacred "sacrament" that could only be administered by a special priestly class. This shift was largely complete by the time of Constantine in the **4th century**.



**Logical Fallacy:** The modern practice is an example of **Reification**, treating a dynamic, living practice as a static, abstract ritual. It also involves a **Strawman** argument by replacing the biblical practice with a counterfeit and then defending the counterfeit as the genuine article. By removing the Lord's Supper from the context of a shared meal, we have lost its communal character. By delaying baptism, we have diminished its significance as the immediate, outward sign of an inward conversion. These traditions have stripped the practices of their original power and meaning, turning them into clerical performances rather than expressions of the life of the church.

# **The First-Century House Church**

## **I. Introduction: A Return to the Original Pattern**

Walk into the average modern church building and observe. You will likely find rows of seats facing a central stage, a designated speaker elevated on a platform, and a congregation of spectators. The service is a performance, a meticulously scheduled program where the majority are passive recipients and a select few are active participants. The architecture itself enforces a hierarchy: the speaker is the focus, the audience is the consumer, and the Word of God is filtered through a single, fallible man. This is the accepted model, the tradition inherited and unquestioned by millions. But it is not the pattern delivered by Christ and His apostles.

The blueprint for the assembly of the saints is found not in the cathedrals of Rome or the megachurches of suburbia, but in the humble, vibrant gatherings that took place in the homes of the first believers. These were not mere Bible studies or small groups ancillary to a larger institution; they *were* the church. The first-century church, a community of believers meeting in homes, was patterned after the ancient synagogue and provides the only biblical blueprint for Christian fellowship. To return to this pattern is not to embrace a novelty but to restore the original design, a design intended to exalt Scripture, foster genuine fellowship, and protect the flock from the doctrines and commandments of men. We must set aside the traditions we have inherited and examine the evidence of the Word of God alone.

## **II. The Ancient Synagogue: The Blueprint**

Before the Church was established, God had already provided a model for community worship and scriptural instruction: the ancient synagogue. These were not grand, imposing structures. On the contrary, they were intimate and local. A synagogue served only those living within a “Sabbath day’s journey,” a radius of approximately 2,000 feet, ensuring that the assembly was composed of true neighbors who shared daily life together.

The physical layout of the synagogue reflected its function. There was no elevated pulpit or stage. The people sat in a square or a circle, facing one another. This arrangement was not accidental; it fostered a sense of community and mutual participation. The focus was not on a single man, but on the collective body and the sacred texts in their midst. Worship was not a spectator sport. Every male from the age of twelve was not only permitted but *expected* to be involved. This was a core component of his religious training. In an orderly fashion, each would take his turn to stand in the center of the assembly, where all could see and hear, and read a portion of the scriptures.

Crucially, this practice was designed to exalt the Word of God, not the man reading it. A young man could select a passage he did not understand, read it aloud, and then receive the wisdom of the elder men present. After the reading, every man who wished to speak on the passage was given the opportunity to do so, responding in an orderly fashion. There was no sermon, no single authoritative interpretation delivered from on high. Instead, the truth was discovered corporately, through the collective participation of the body, guided by the elders. This was the blueprint: a

decentralized, participatory, Scripture-centered gathering of a local community. It was this divine pattern that the Holy Spirit would adapt and sanctify for the body of Christ.

### **III. The First-Century House Church: A Practical Model**

When the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, the newly born church did not invent a new structure for worship. They did not lay the foundations for cathedrals or seminaries. Instead, they adopted the familiar and effective model of the synagogue and brought it into their homes. The book of Acts testifies that the believers continued "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts 2:46). While they used the temple courts for public preaching, the intimate life of the church—the fellowship, the teaching, the breaking of bread—happened in the home.

The structure mirrored that of the synagogue. Believers would gather in the home of a member, sitting in a circle or a square. When it was time to read from the apostles' writings or the gospels, a man would stand in the center so all could hear. He would read a short portion, often a passage he sought to understand more deeply, and then sit down. Following this, the assembly, guided by the Holy Spirit, would respond. In an orderly fashion, from the youngest to the oldest, those who had an insight or an exhortation would share it with the body. This was not a chaotic free-for-all; it was a disciplined, participatory exercise in mutual edification, overseen by an elder who could correct any error. Every meeting was intensely interesting, as no one knew in advance which scriptures would be discussed. Every man was being trained weekly to understand the Word, to articulate his faith, and to defend the truth.

Following the deep study of the Word came the "Love Feast" (Jude 1:12). This was not the sterile, symbolic ritual of a tiny wafer and a thimble of juice common today. It was a genuine, shared meal, a potluck dinner where all ate their fill with "gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). During this feast, the body and blood of Christ were remembered. As the bread was passed and eaten, the believers recalled His body, broken for them. As the fruit of the vine was shared, they remembered His blood, shed for the remission of their sins. This act of communion was embedded within the context of real food, real fellowship, and real community.

Finally, a collection would be taken. This money was not for a building fund, a pastor's salary, or administrative overhead. The purpose was simple and biblical: to care for the poor, the widows, the orphans, and any within the body who had a desperate need. The house church was a family. No one went away wanting. Their needs, both spiritual and physical, were met within the loving embrace of the household of God. This was the practical, powerful, and self-sufficient model of the first-century church.

### **IV. A Call to Action: Start Your Own House Church**

The restoration of the biblical pattern of the church does not require a committee, a budget, or a building permit. It does not require a seminary-trained professional or a denominational charter. The process is profoundly simple, accessible to any believer who is captive to the Word of God. All that is needed to start a house church is the Holy Bible. If you have the scriptures, you have everything necessary.



The first step is to obey the second great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). Define your neighborhood. Go two thousand feet—a Sabbath day's journey, about four city blocks—in every direction from your own home. Knock on every door and seek out those who profess faith in Christ. Invite them to your home for a Bible reading and a shared meal. Ask each family to bring their Bibles and a dish of food to share with everyone after the study.

The format is simple. Begin with prayer. Take turns reading the scriptures, allowing each person to choose a passage they wish to understand. Then, in an orderly fashion, discuss what was read, allowing the Holy Spirit to teach through the members of the body. After the study, share the Love Feast together, remembering the Lord's death as you break bread and drink the fruit of the vine. Take up a collection to be used exclusively for the poor and needy in your community. Rotate the meeting from house to house, allowing each family the blessing of hosting the assembly.

Consider the effect this will have. A true, family-like atmosphere will develop, where believers are intimately involved in one another's lives. This provides a powerful witness to the unbelieving world. They will see a people who genuinely love one another, who bear one another's burdens, and who care for the poor among them. Imagine how easy it becomes to invite a lonely or searching neighbor into this environment. An invitation to a home for a meal and an open discussion of the Bible is far less intimidating than an invitation to a formal, institutional service. It is a natural, relational, and profoundly biblical way to fulfill the Great Commission, one household at a time. If the group grows too large for one home, that is not a problem to be solved with a building program. It is a blessing to be multiplied. It is time to start another house church, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide each one, for "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

## **V. Discovering Truth: The Biblical Method**

The house church model is not merely a different structure; it is a structure designed to facilitate a different method of discovering truth. It protects the flock from the primary way heresy enters the church: the elevation of a single man and his private interpretation over the plain testimony of Scripture. To guard against this, we must adhere to the biblical method of topical study.

The first step is to set aside all preconceived ideas. Your denominational training, the books you have read, the sermons you have heard—all of it must be held in suspicion. Opinions do not matter. The Holy Bible, and the Holy Bible alone, is the source of all truth. Let God be true, but every man a liar (Romans 3:4).

The second step is to find one hundred percent of the verses in the Holy Bible on the topic being discussed. Do not leave a single verse out. Use tools like a concordance to be exhaustive. The goal is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Most major biblical topics are mentioned in thirty to sixty verses.

The third step is to believe what the overwhelming weight of the evidence clearly teaches. When you gather all the verses on a topic, you will find that approximately ninety-five percent of them teach the exact same thing with such clarity that a child could understand it. There may be one or

two verses—the remaining five percent—that appear to teach something different. The truth is found with the majority. We must take our stand with the clear, unambiguous testimony of the ninety-five percent. The few verses that seem to conflict must be studied more carefully in the light of the clearer passages. In the end, it will always be demonstrated that there is one hundred percent unity in the scriptures.

This is how heresy occurs. A man will stubbornly hold on to the one or two ambiguous verses, ignoring the thirty-five or more clear verses that contradict his position. He will not be convinced, no matter how much scripture is shown to him. Another way heresy enters is through "hero worship." A famous church father, a reformer, or a modern author says something, and his followers will defend his words against the plain teaching of the Bible. Such a person is not a Bible-alone Christian; he is a follower of a man. We are commanded to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). This biblical method of study, practiced within the context of a participatory house church, is the divine safeguard against such deception.

## VI. The Biblical Foundation: House Churches in Scripture

The assertion that the house church is the biblical pattern is not based on inference or preference, but on the direct and consistent testimony of the New Testament. The institutional, centralized church model is utterly absent from the pages of Scripture. The apostles did not build grand cathedrals; they planted churches in the homes of believers.

Consider the evidence:

- **Acts 2:46:** "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread **from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." The lifeblood of the church was in the homes.
- **Acts 8:3:** "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into **every house**, and haling men and women committed them to prison." Saul knew where to find the church: not in a building, but in the houses.
- **Romans 16:5:** "Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**." Paul sends greetings to Aquila and Priscilla and the assembly that met in their home.
- **1 Corinthians 16:19:** "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with **the church that is in their house**." Again, a specific church is identified by the home in which it met.
- **Colossians 4:15:** "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and **the church which is in his house**." Another example of a church being located in a private residence.
- **Philemon 1:2:** "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to **the church in thy house**." Paul's letter to Philemon is addressed not just to him, but to the entire church that assembled in his home.

Within this network of house churches, God ordained certain offices to serve the body. These were not hierarchical titles but functions. **Evangelists**, like Philip, were those who preached the gospel and established new believers (Acts 21:8). **Bishops** (also called overseers) were men of blameless character who were "apt to teach" and rule their own houses well, thus being qualified to care for the church of God (1 Timothy 3:1-7). **Elders** were spiritually mature men who ruled well, labored in the word and doctrine, and were to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3). **Deacons** were servants who handled the practical and logistical needs of the church, particularly the care of the needy (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

These men served the local house churches. There was no concept of a single pastor ruling over a congregation, a bishop ruling over a city, or a pope ruling over the world. The apostles warned against such divisions and the elevation of men, asking, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). The biblical foundation is clear: a decentralized network of house churches, served by qualified men functioning as elders and deacons, all under the headship of Christ alone.

## VII. Avoiding Heresy: A Final Warning

The final and most urgent reason to return to the biblical pattern of the house church is for the preservation of sound doctrine and the protection of the people of God from heresy. The modern institutional church system, with its emphasis on a single, salaried pastor, creates an environment ripe for the introduction of false doctrine. The congregation is conditioned to be passive, to receive teaching without question, and to equate the pastor's words with the Word of God. This is a dangerous departure from the apostolic pattern.

The Scriptures are unequivocal in their command to reject false teachers and their doctrines. We are not to debate them, entertain their ideas, or give them a platform. The command is to separate. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**" (Romans 16:17). The instruction is not to reason with them, but to identify them and have nothing to do with them.

Titus 3:10 is even more direct: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition **reject**." There is no room for compromise. A heretic is one who promotes a doctrine contrary to the faith once delivered to the saints. After being corrected twice from the Scriptures, if he persists, he is to be rejected from the fellowship. This is not an act of cruelty, but of love—love for the purity of the truth and love for the flock that must be protected from wolves in sheep's clothing.

The house church, with its emphasis on universal participation and the topical study of God's Word, is a fortress against such error. When every man is trained to search the Scriptures for himself, when the entire assembly is responsible for discerning the truth together, it becomes exceedingly difficult for a single man to lead the flock astray with "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men" (Colossians 2:8).

The core message is this: the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the only source of truth. Any doctrine, tradition, or practice that cannot be substantiated by the overwhelming weight of scriptural evidence must be rejected. The house church is not merely a stylistic preference; it is the biblical



pattern for the people of God, a sanctuary where the Word of God is exalted, the saints are edified, and the truth is preserved. Let us therefore cast off the traditions of men and return to the ancient paths, to the simple and powerful model of the church that meets in the house.

## **Part IV: The Elijah Message**

### **The Call to Repentance**

A systematic analysis of the biblical doctrine of the church must begin with the direct, authoritative words of its head, Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation, functioning as the final testimony of Christ, opens with a series of audits directed at seven specific, historical churches. These messages serve as a permanent, unalterable record of Christ's standards for His assemblies. A recurring, non-negotiable command is issued five times within these audits, forming a foundational principle for church conduct and survival: "Repent." To ascertain the precise operational meaning of this command, a topical Bible study is required, isolating every relevant verse from Revelation chapters 2 and 3. This methodology mandates the exclusion of all post-canonical traditions, denominational frameworks, and human commentaries. The King James Version text must function as the sole and final authority. The objective is to deconstruct the scriptural data, define what repentance requires in each specific context, and identify the explicit consequences for failure to comply, thereby building a complete, biblically-derived doctrine of ecclesiastical repentance.

The first instance of this command is directed to the church at Ephesus. The initial data presents a commendation for their works, labor, patience, and intolerance for evil. They are praised for having "tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Revelation 2:2). This establishes their doctrinal soundness and vigilance. However, a critical failure is then identified: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). This is not a charge of heresy or moral failure, but of a decay in their core motivation and affection for Christ. The directive issued to correct this failure is a three-part command: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). The first step is a cognitive act of remembering their former state of devotion. The second is to "repent," a fundamental change of mind and direction concerning their present decline. The third is to return to the actions that were the natural product of that initial, fervent love. The consequence for non-compliance is explicitly stated and severe: "or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).

From this data, a foundational principle is established. The candlestick is explicitly defined as the church itself ("the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches," Revelation 1:20). Therefore, the removal of the candlestick is not a metaphor for a loss of blessing or a period of divine chastening; it signifies the termination of its status as a church. We must conclude that the continued existence of any church is conditional. Outward labor and correct doctrine, while commended, are insufficient to guarantee its standing before Christ. The primary requirement is a fervent, motivating love for Christ Himself. When that love is abandoned, repentance is the only mechanism to prevent spiritual extinction. A church that will not repent of its loss of love for Christ will cease to be a church in His eyes, regardless of its external activities or reputation.

The second directive to repent is given to the church in Pergamos. This assembly is commended for its steadfastness under extreme pressure, for holding fast to Christ's name even while dwelling "where Satan's seat is" and in the face of martyrdom (Revelation 2:13). Yet, their internal state was compromised. They are condemned for tolerating false doctrine in their midst: "But I have a

few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate” (Revelation 2:14-15). Their failure was not in personally adhering to these heresies, but in passively allowing them to exist and propagate within the assembly. The command is sharp and direct: “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2:16).

The analysis of this passage defines repentance, in this context, as the active and intolerant purging of heresy from the congregation. The church’s sin was one of doctrinal negligence and a failure to exercise spiritual discipline. The “sword of my mouth” is identified in Scripture as the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17). The ultimatum is clear: if the church refuses to use the Word of God to judge and expel the false teachers, Christ Himself will come and personally wage war against them with that same Word. This establishes a critical principle of ecclesiastical responsibility. A church is mandated to be the guardian of its own doctrinal purity. It must not only believe truth but actively confront and remove falsehood. A passive tolerance of heresy is seen by Christ as a justification for His direct, hostile intervention. Repentance, therefore, is the church’s only means of avoiding a direct conflict with its own Lord.

The situation in Thyatira presents a third, more severe case of tolerated corruption. This church is initially commended for its works, charity, service, faith, and patience, with their “last works to be more than the first” (Revelation 2:19). However, this commendable service was nullified by a grievous compromise: “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Revelation 2:20). This figure, symbolically named, represents a deeply corrupting, seductive, and authoritative source of false teaching that was leading the congregation into pagan practices. The text reveals God’s patience, stating, “And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Revelation 2:21). This provides a crucial insight: God’s judgment is preceded by a period of long-suffering, offering even grievous offenders an opportunity to change course.

When this opportunity is refused, however, judgment is certain. The Lord declares, “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts” (Revelation 2:22-23). The call to repent is the only escape route from “great tribulation.” The judgment is not limited to the false teacher; it extends to all who participated in her spiritual adultery and followed her teachings. Repentance, for them, is the act of ceasing all participation and fully separating from this corrupting influence. This serves as a permanent, unalterable warning. Tolerating seductive doctrines that normalize sin is not a demonstration of grace but an act of spiritual negligence that invites catastrophic, targeted judgment from Christ.

The fourth call to repent is issued to the church in Sardis, which suffers from a state of spiritual death. It receives no commendation. The diagnosis is stark: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1). This was a church with a public reputation for vitality, yet in the eyes of Christ, it was a corpse. Its works were incomplete, not being “perfect



before God” (Revelation 3:2). They were the hollow motions of religion devoid of spiritual life. The command provides the only path to resurrection: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die... Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent” (Revelation 3:2-3). The remedy for this spiritual death is to remember the authentic gospel they first received, to hold fast to that truth, and to fundamentally change their entire course. The warning for failure is equally stark: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).

For the church at Sardis, repentance is the required action to reverse a state of terminal hypocrisy. The coming of Christ “as a thief” is a promise of sudden, unexpected judgment upon a church that is merely performing religious activities without genuine spiritual life. This data establishes that a church’s reputation and programs are of no value if the assembly is spiritually dead. Repentance is the only mechanism for revival, a conscious return to the life-giving truth of the gospel they had once known but had since abandoned in practice.

The final command to repent is found in the message to the church of the Laodiceans, the archetype of lukewarm self-sufficiency. This church is diagnosed as “lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot,” a condition so nauseating to Christ that He declares, “I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16). Their material wealth had fostered a delusional spiritual pride: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Their self-assessment was 180 degrees contrary to Christ’s reality. Yet, even to this repulsive church, a path of restoration is offered, prefaced by a declaration of love: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19). The Lord’s sharp rebuke is presented not as an act of final rejection, but as a severe mercy designed to awaken them. The call to “be zealous” is a command to move from their sickening state of apathy to one of spiritual fervor. This is followed by the poignant image of Christ standing outside His own church: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

In this final context, repentance is a radical shift from arrogant self-sufficiency to a humble acknowledgment of desperate spiritual need. It is the act of hearing the voice of the excluded Christ and opening the door to His lordship and fellowship. The consequence of remaining lukewarm is total and final rejection—to be spewed from His mouth. Therefore, repentance is the only alternative.

A synthesis of these five commands yields a clear, multifaceted, and non-negotiable biblical doctrine. Ecclesiastical repentance is not a one-time event at conversion but a continuous, conditional requirement for the church. It is the mandated response to specific, identified failures: (1) the loss of primary love for Christ, (2) the passive tolerance of false doctrine, (3) active complicity with seductive and immoral teachings, (4) the hypocrisy of spiritual deadness behind a facade of life, and (5) the delusion of lukewarm self-sufficiency. In every scriptural instance, the command to repent is an ultimatum. The very existence of the church, its doctrinal integrity, its protection from divine judgment, and its fellowship with Christ are all contingent upon its obedience to this command. The consequences for refusal are not abstract possibilities but

certainties: the revocation of a church's identity, direct warfare from Christ, great tribulation, sudden destruction, and ultimate, final rejection.

## The Mother of Harlots

The prophetic testimony of Scripture presents two opposing spiritual entities, depicted as women: the pure bride of Christ, and the great whore of Babylon. To understand the latter, a systematic analysis of Revelation chapter 17 is required. This chapter provides the most detailed prophetic description of this entity, defining her identity, influence, and ultimate judgment. Adhering to the principles of Sola Scriptura, we must allow the text to define its own symbols. Any interpretation must be grounded in the explicit statements of the King James Version, cross-referenced with other relevant scriptures, and free from the contamination of human tradition or speculation. The objective is to construct a precise, biblically-derived identification of this figure, known as “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

The analysis begins with the introduction of the subject by one of the seven angels who administered the final plagues: “Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Revelation 17:1-2). The initial data points are critical. First, the entity is identified as a “great whore,” a term used consistently in Scripture to denote spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry, particularly in the context of those who were once in a covenant relationship with God (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:6-9; Ezekiel 16:15-35). Second, her influence is global. She “sitteth upon many waters,” and has illicit relationships (“committed fornication”) with the “kings of the earth.” Third, her influence extends beyond the ruling class to the general population, as the “inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” This wine represents a corrupting influence that impairs judgment and leads to spiritual intoxication.

The vision is then detailed: “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:3-6).

A systematic deconstruction of these symbols is necessary, using the Bible’s own interpretive keys.

**The Identity of the Waters:** The text does not leave the meaning of the “many waters” to speculation. The angel provides a direct definition: “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). This is a definitive statement. The woman’s base of power and influence is not a geographical location defined by bodies of water, but a global dominion over the masses of humanity. She sits enthroned upon the collective populations of the world, indicating a system of control that transcends national, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. Her authority is derived from and exercised over a vast, international populace.



**The Identity of the Woman:** The text also provides a direct definition for the woman herself. After describing her relationship with the kings of the earth and the beast, the angel concludes: “And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18). This verse is unequivocal. The woman is not a literal person, but a symbolic representation of a “great city.” This city is further defined by its function: it is a ruling power that exercises dominion over the political structures of the world. The description of her attire—purple and scarlet, gold, precious stones, and pearls—denotes immense wealth, luxury, and royal authority. This is not a secular city, but one that claims spiritual significance, yet is engaged in spiritual harlotry. The name on her forehead, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,” connects her directly to the ancient city of Babylon, which in Scripture is the archetype of organized rebellion against God, idolatry, and confusion (Genesis 11:1-9).

**The Golden Cup and its Wine:** The woman holds a “golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (Revelation 17:4). This imagery is not unique to Revelation. The prophet Jeremiah used the exact same symbol to describe the historical Babylon: “Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad” (Jeremiah 51:7). By using this established prophetic symbol, the text identifies the woman’s intoxicating influence as a system of false doctrine. The wine is her teaching, a mixture that appears attractive (a golden cup) but is filled with abominations and spiritual filth. It is a seductive blend of truth and error designed to deceive the nations and lead them away from the pure commandments of God. The inhabitants of the earth are “made drunk” with this wine, indicating a loss of spiritual discernment and an addiction to her false teachings. They are unable to reason clearly or perceive the truth, having been intoxicated by her doctrines.

**The Mother of Harlots:** The name on her forehead further clarifies her identity: “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS.” This title signifies that she is the originator of a system of spiritual unfaithfulness. She is not the only harlot; she has produced daughters. These “harlot” daughters are other religious systems and churches that have sprung from her, adopting her core doctrines, traditions, and methods. They may differ in appearance, but they share a family resemblance, having been born from her spiritual fornication. This establishes the woman as the head of a vast, apostate religious system with numerous offshoots and denominations that are all, in essence, extensions of her own rebellion against God. She is the matriarch of organized apostasy.

**Drunken with the Blood of the Saints:** The final descriptor of her character is her violent, persecuting nature: “And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). This is not a passive entity; she is an active and relentless persecutor of the true followers of Christ. The imagery of being “drunken” with their blood portrays a deep-seated, insatiable, and frenzied hatred for those who hold to the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God. This characteristic is a key identifier. Any entity claiming to be the great city that reigns over the kings of the earth must also have a historical record of persecuting and martyring true believers. This is not a future characteristic but a defining trait of her entire existence.

**The Beast She Rides:** The woman is seen sitting upon a “scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3). The beast represents a political and secular power. The woman (the religious system) is supported by and in alliance with the beast

(the political system). She rides it, indicating a position of guidance and control, using the political power of the world to achieve her own ends. The seven heads are given a dual interpretation. First, “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (Revelation 17:9). This points to a specific geographical location, a city famously known for being built on seven hills. Second, they represent a succession of kingdoms: “And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space” (Revelation 17:10). This describes a historical progression of world empires that form the political foundation upon which this religious system operates.

In summary, a systematic, topical analysis of Revelation 17, using only the interpretative keys provided within the King James Version, yields a precise and detailed profile. The Mother of Harlots is not an individual but a “great city” that functions as a global, apostate religious system. Her key identifiers are:

1. **Global Dominion:** She rules over the peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues of the earth.
2. **Political Alliance:** She reigns over the kings of the earth, riding and directing the secular political powers of the world.
3. **Immense Wealth:** She is adorned with the symbols of royalty and vast riches.
4. **Doctrinal Corruption:** She makes the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her false doctrines, a seductive mixture of truth and error held in a golden cup.
5. **Progenitor of Apostasy:** She is the “Mother of Harlots,” having given birth to numerous other churches and systems that share her corrupt nature.
6. **Persecuting Power:** She has a long and bloody history of persecuting and martyring the true saints of Jesus.
7. **Geographical Identification:** She is seated upon seven mountains.

This scriptural data provides a clear set of verifiable characteristics. This entity is a wealthy, powerful, political, persecuting, global, and apostate religious system, centered in a great city built on seven hills, that has produced many daughter churches and deceives the world with its false doctrines.

## **The Danger of Man-Made Doctrines**

A primary mechanism by which spiritual deception operates is the substitution of human teachings for divine commands. This process involves the creation and imposition of doctrines, traditions, and commandments that originate not from God, but from the minds of men. An analysis of the Scriptures reveals that Jesus Christ and His apostles issued direct and severe warnings against this practice. To construct a complete biblical doctrine on this subject, we must conduct a topical study, gathering all relevant verses to identify the nature of these man-made doctrines, their effect on the Word of God, and the final judgment reserved for them. This analysis will proceed without reference to external theological systems, relying solely on the King James Version text as the final authority.

The most direct warning from Jesus Christ on this matter is recorded in His confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees. They questioned why His disciples transgressed the “tradition of the elders” by not washing their hands before eating (Matthew 15:2). Christ’s response bypasses their superficial concern and strikes at the root of their entire religious system. He counters with a question of His own: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3). He provides a specific example concerning their tradition of “Corban,” a practice whereby a man could dedicate his financial resources to God, thereby nullifying his scriptural obligation to care for his aging parents (Mark 7:11-12). Christ’s verdict on this practice is absolute: “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:6).

This interaction establishes a critical principle: human tradition, when elevated to the level of a religious obligation, does not merely supplement the Word of God; it actively nullifies it. It renders the clear commands of Scripture void and without power in the lives of its adherents. Christ then quotes the prophet Esaias to deliver a final diagnosis of their spiritual state: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:7-9).

From this data, several conclusions are mandated. First, worship based on human commandments is “in vain.” It is useless, empty, and unacceptable to God, regardless of the outward sincerity or piety of the worshipper. Second, it is a characteristic of hypocrisy to honor God with words while the heart is distant, a condition directly linked to the practice of enforcing man-made doctrines. The core issue is one of authority. When a religious system begins to teach the “commandments of men” *as if* they were the doctrines of God, it has usurped the authority of God Himself and invalidated its own worship.

Christ used a specific metaphor to warn His disciples about this corrupting influence. After feeding the four thousand, He told them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6). The disciples initially misunderstood, thinking He was referring to literal bread. Christ corrected their thinking, and “Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:12).



Leaven, or yeast, is a substance that, in small quantities, permeates and transforms an entire lump of dough. It works silently and pervasively. By using this metaphor, Christ identifies false doctrine as a corrupting agent. It does not need to be a wholesale rejection of truth. A small amount of man-made teaching, when introduced into a body of belief, will inevitably spread and corrupt the whole system. The Apostle Paul uses the same metaphor in his letter to the Galatians, who were being tempted to add the works of the law to the gospel of grace: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). The warning is clear: the doctrines of men are not benign additions; they are a spiritual contagion that must be vigilantly guarded against.

Following His condemnation of the Pharisees’ traditions, Christ provides a definitive statement on the ultimate fate of all such teachings: “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13). This agricultural analogy is absolute. Any doctrine, tradition, or religious system that does not originate with God the Father is illegitimate. It is a foreign plant in His field. Its temporary growth and flourishing are irrelevant. Its final destiny is to be violently uprooted and destroyed. This is a divine guarantee. Believers are not called to reform or prune these man-made systems, but to recognize them for what they are and to trust in God’s promise of their eventual demolition. Christ’s instruction concerning the teachers of these doctrines is equally direct: “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14). There is no command to enter into endless debate or to seek ecumenical unity. The command is to separate from them, recognizing that their path, and the path of all who follow them, leads to certain destruction.

The apostles carried this foundational teaching of Christ throughout their ministry. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, warns the believers against being taken captive by man-made religious systems. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). Here, the source of these dangerous doctrines is identified: “philosophy,” “vain deceit,” and the “tradition of men.” These are contrasted directly with Christ, who is the sole source of all true doctrine. Paul specifically identifies ascetic practices like “touch not; taste not; handle not” as being “after the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:21-22). He acknowledges that these rules have “a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,” but ultimately, they are of no value. They are human inventions, not divine commands.

In his pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul gives further warnings. He instructs Timothy that in the latter times, some will “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). He warns Titus to rebuke false teachers sharply, “Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth” (Titus 1:14). This verse establishes a critical link: giving heed to the commandments of men is an act that causes one to “turn from the truth.” The two are mutually exclusive. One cannot follow the traditions of men and the truth of God simultaneously.

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a clear and unambiguous doctrine. The commandments and doctrines of men are a dangerous and corrupting influence within the church. Their defining characteristics are:

1. **Source:** They originate from human wisdom, philosophy, and tradition, not from God.
2. **Effect:** They nullify the actual commandments of God, rendering them of “none effect.”
3. **Nature:** They are a spiritual “leaven” that, even in small amounts, pervasively corrupts the entire body of doctrine.
4. **Worship:** Worship based upon them is “in vain,” useless and rejected by God.
5. **Destiny:** As plants not planted by the Father, they are divinely appointed to be “rooted up” and destroyed.
6. **Adherents:** Those who teach and follow them are described as the “blind leading the blind,” destined to fall into a ditch.

The biblical mandate is not to integrate, accommodate, or reform these man-made doctrines. The command is to “beware” of them, to “let them alone,” and to refuse to give them any heed, recognizing that they are a direct path away from the truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

## The Blindness of Deception

The propagation of false doctrine and the success of spiritual deception are contingent upon a specific condition in the hearer: an inability to perceive, understand, or accept the truth. The Scriptures identify this condition as spiritual blindness. This is not a passive state of ignorance, but an active condition of the heart and mind that prevents the light of the gospel from penetrating. A topical analysis of the King James Version reveals that this blindness is a multifaceted phenomenon. It involves the active intervention of a spiritual adversary, the judicial response of God to unbelief, and the internal disposition of the human heart. To construct a complete biblical doctrine on this subject, we must examine the primary texts that describe this condition, allowing the Word of God alone to define its cause, nature, and consequences.

The foundational mechanism for this blindness is detailed by Jesus Christ in the Parable of the Sower. In this parable, the "seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11), and the receptivity of the "soil," or the human heart, determines the outcome. The first category of hearer is described as the seed that fell "by the way side." The synoptic gospels provide a three-part, harmonized explanation of this failure. Matthew records, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Matthew 13:19). Mark adds the immediacy of the action: "but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts" (Mark 4:15). Luke reveals the ultimate purpose behind this theft: "then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12).

A synthesis of this data provides a precise, clinical description of the initial stage of spiritual blindness.

1. **The Condition:** The process begins when a person hears the Word but does not understand it. This lack of understanding is the critical vulnerability.
2. **The Agent:** An active, intelligent adversary identified as "the wicked one," "Satan," and "the devil" exploits this vulnerability.
3. **The Action:** The adversary's action is immediate and specific: he "catcheth away" or "taketh away" the Word from the person's heart.
4. **The Motive:** The explicit goal of this theft is to prevent the person from reaching a state of belief and salvation.

This establishes a fundamental doctrine: spiritual blindness is initiated by a failure of comprehension, which is immediately exploited by Satan to prevent salvation. The Word of God does not fail; rather, the unreceptive heart provides an opportunity for the enemy to ensure the seed never takes root. This is the primary battleground for truth: the human mind's ability to understand what it has heard. Deception flourishes where understanding fails.

While the initial blindness can be attributed to a lack of understanding exploited by Satan, the Scriptures describe a more hardened, permanent state of blindness that is judicial in nature. This is a condition not merely allowed by God, but actively imposed by Him as an act of judgment. Jesus explains the very reason He speaks in parables by quoting a prophecy from Isaiah: "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not



understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:14-15).

The critical phrase in this passage is “their eyes they have closed.” The initial action is their own. The people themselves chose to shut their eyes to the truth. God’s judicial act of blinding is a confirmation and solidification of a state they have already chosen. He gives them over to the spiritual condition they desire. The prophet Isaiah was commanded by God, “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9-10). The divine command to “make” their hearts fat and their ears heavy is a judgment upon their pre-existing rebellion.

This theme of judicial blindness is a consistent doctrine throughout Scripture. The Apostle John, explaining the unbelief of the Jews despite witnessing Christ’s miracles, quotes the same prophecy from Isaiah and states, “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (John 12:39-40). The Apostle Paul, at the very end of the book of Acts, confronts the unbelieving Jews in Rome with the same prophecy, concluding that their rejection of the gospel has resulted in their spiritual senses being shut down by God (Acts 28:25-27). Paul further explains this principle in his epistle to the Romans: “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day” (Romans 11:7-8).

The scriptural data is conclusive. There is a state of spiritual blindness that is a direct, judicial act of God. However, this act is not arbitrary. It is a divine sentence passed upon those who first willfully close their own eyes, dull their own ears, and harden their own hearts against the truth that has been presented to them. It is a terrifying state where God confirms their rejection by removing the very ability to repent. This judicial blindness is the ultimate ground upon which deception can be built, creating a people who are unable to discern truth from error because God Himself has sealed their spiritual senses.

In direct contrast to the blindness of the proud and rebellious, the Scripture presents an opposing principle: spiritual sight is granted based on humility, not intellect. Jesus articulates this doctrine in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father: “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25).

This statement deconstructs the world’s criteria for understanding. The “wise and prudent” are not those with genuine wisdom, but those who are wise in their own eyes, relying on their own intellect, education, and reasoning. They are the scribes, the Pharisees, the philosophers—those who believe their own minds are the final arbiters of truth. God does not merely allow them to be

blind; He actively “hid” the truths of the kingdom from them. Their intellectual pride is a barrier that God Himself erects against their understanding.

Conversely, God has “revealed” these same truths unto “babes.” A babe, in this context, is not a reference to chronological age, but to a state of being. A babe is characterized by dependence, humility, trust, and a lack of self-sufficiency. A babe does not have the intellectual pride or the accumulated traditions of the “wise and prudent.” It is to this simple, trusting, and humble heart that God chooses to grant the revelation of His truth. Spiritual sight, therefore, is not an intellectual achievement but a divine gift bestowed upon the humble. The Apostle Paul affirms this, stating, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27).

A synthesis of these three biblical themes provides a complete doctrine of spiritual blindness. It is the essential precondition for all successful deception. It begins when a hearer fails to understand the Word, a failure immediately exploited by Satan to prevent salvation. For those who persist in unbelief, willfully closing their own eyes and ears to the truth, this condition can be made permanent by a judicial act of God, who gives them over to a spirit of slumber from which they cannot awaken. The escape from this blindness is not found in greater intellect or worldly wisdom, but in its opposite: the humble, dependent posture of a babe. It is to this heart that God reveals His truth, while actively hiding it from the proud. The spiritually blind, therefore, are not victims of a lack of evidence, but of a condition of the heart that makes them incapable of processing the evidence that has been given.

## Avoiding Deception

Given the existence of spiritual deception, the active intervention of Satan, and the judicial blinding of the rebellious, the Scriptures do not leave the believer without a defense. This defense is not a mystical or passive state, but a series of direct, actionable commands. A topical analysis of the King James Version reveals a comprehensive protocol for identifying, resisting, and separating from deceptive influences. To construct this doctrine, we must gather the explicit warnings and instructions given by Christ and His apostles. The objective is to define the believer's mandated responsibility in an environment where false Christs and false prophets are not a remote possibility, but a guaranteed reality. This analysis will proceed without reference to external traditions, relying solely on the biblical text as the final authority.

The foundational command is issued by Jesus Christ in the Olivet Discourse, His most detailed prophetic sermon concerning the end of the age. In response to the disciples' question about the signs of His coming, Christ's very first words are a warning: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). This is the prime directive, the primary lens through which all subsequent signs and events must be viewed. The warning is repeated for emphasis across the synoptic gospels (Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8). The immediate context for this warning is the rise of religious deception: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:5). This is not a prediction of a few isolated impostors, but of a widespread movement of false teachers who will usurp the name and authority of Christ to mislead a large number of people.

Christ expands on the nature and power of this deception later in the discourse: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). A systematic deconstruction of this verse is required.

1. **The Agents:** The agents of deception are identified as "false Christs" (those who claim to be the Messiah) and "false prophets" (those who claim to speak for God).
2. **The Method:** Their primary tool is not subtle philosophical argument, but the performance of "great signs and wonders." This is a critical data point. The deception will be validated by supernatural manifestations, appealing to the senses and appearing to be authentic works of divine power.
3. **The Target Audience:** The power of this deception is so profound that its intended target includes "the very elect." The phrase "if it were possible" does not imply that the elect cannot be deceived, but rather highlights the extreme potency of the delusion. It is a form of deception so powerful that it approaches the threshold of being completely irresistible, even for God's chosen people. Mark's account uses the word "seduce" (Mark 13:22), indicating a deception that is not a violent assault but an alluring and persuasive enticement.

This establishes a crucial doctrine: supernatural signs are not, in themselves, proof of divine origin. Scripture guarantees that false prophets will produce them. Therefore, the believer's defense

cannot be based on sensory experience or an appeal to the miraculous. The validity of any teacher or doctrine must be judged by a standard that transcends signs and wonders.

The Apostle Paul provides a more detailed profile of these deceptive agents in his second letter to the Corinthians. He identifies them as “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). The key action here is “transforming.” They are engaged in a conscious act of mimicry and disguise. Their appearance is a deliberate counterfeit. Paul explains that this should not be surprising: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

This passage provides an unalterable principle for identifying deception. The most dangerous false teachers will not appear evil, heretical, or corrupt. They will appear as “ministers of righteousness.” Their speech will be pious, their demeanor will seem holy, and their presentation will be that of an authentic servant of God. This is a direct parallel to their master, Satan, who does not appear as a monstrous figure but as a beautiful and alluring “angel of light.” Therefore, the believer is explicitly warned that deception will come from sources that look, sound, and feel righteous. Any method of discernment that relies on outward appearance, charisma, or perceived piety is biblically guaranteed to fail.

Given the certainty of sophisticated, supernaturally-validated, and righteous-appearing deception, the Scripture provides a specific, mandatory testing protocol. The Apostle John commands, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The default position of the believer is to be one of initial skepticism (“believe not every spirit”). Every spiritual claim, every prophecy, every teaching must be subjected to a test (“try the spirits”). The reason given is the fact that “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The test itself is doctrinal: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:2-3). This is not merely a test of acknowledging the historical existence of Jesus, but of confessing the full truth of the incarnation—that the eternal Son of God became fully human. This doctrinal test, and others like it, forms the core of the believer’s defense. The appeal is not to emotion, experience, or miracles, but to the fixed, unchanging doctrinal truth of Scripture.

When a teacher or doctrine fails this test, the believer’s response is not to engage in endless debate, but to separate. Paul’s instruction to the Romans is explicit: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). The process is twofold: first, to “mark” or identify those who teach contrary to established apostolic doctrine, and second, to “avoid them.” This is a command of complete separation. The Apostle John gives an even more severe directive: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 1:10-11). To offer hospitality or even a verbal blessing to a false teacher is to become a “partaker of his evil deeds.” The biblical mandate is one of zero tolerance for those who corrupt the core doctrines of the faith.



Finally, Christ provides a principle for the stewardship of divine truth in the face of hardened opposition. In the Sermon on the Mount, He commands, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew 7:6). In this context, that which is “holy” and the “pearls” represent the precious truths of the gospel and the kingdom of God. The “dogs” and “swine” represent those who are not merely ignorant or seeking, but are contemptuous, hostile, and spiritually unclean. They have no appreciation for the value of the truth. The command is to discern when an audience is of this nature. To continue offering the sacred truths of the gospel to those who will only mock, profane, and attack it is a violation of this command. It results in two negative outcomes: the truth is dishonored (“trample them under their feet”), and the messenger is attacked (“turn again and rend you”). This is not a command to be arrogant or to withhold the gospel from sincere seekers. It is a command of spiritual discernment and preservation. It is the principle of knowing when to disengage from a willfully blind and hostile audience. This harmonizes with Christ’s instruction to His disciples: “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet” (Matthew 10:14).

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a complete, multi-layered protocol for avoiding deception.

1. **Constant Vigilance:** The believer must operate under the prime directive to “take heed that no man deceive you,” recognizing that deception is the primary danger.
2. **Transcend the Supernatural:** The believer must understand that “great signs and wonders” will be used by false prophets and are not a reliable indicator of truth.
3. **Penetrate the Disguise:** The believer must recognize that the most dangerous deceivers will be transformed to appear as “ministers of righteousness.” Outward appearance is not a valid test.
4. **Apply Doctrinal Tests:** The believer is commanded to “try the spirits” by subjecting all teachings to the doctrinal standard of the Word of God.
5. **Practice Separation:** Upon identifying a false teacher, the believer is commanded to “avoid them” and not to extend any form of spiritual partnership or blessing, lest they partake in their evil deeds.
6. **Exercise Discernment:** The believer must discern when an audience is hostile and contemptuous of the truth, and in such cases, cease casting pearls before them.

This biblical framework mandates an active, discerning, and doctrinally-grounded approach to faith. The defense against deception is not passive, but requires constant vigilance, rigorous testing of all teachings against Scripture, and a willingness to separate completely from that which is false.

## **Fables and False Gospels**

The substitution of human tradition for divine command is a foundational method of deception. A direct consequence of this substitution is the abandonment of biblical truth in favor of fabricated religious narratives. The Scriptures identify this phenomenon with a specific term: “fables.” Furthermore, the apostles issued the most severe condemnations possible against those who would alter the core message of salvation itself, creating a counterfeit or “false gospel.” A topical analysis is required to deconstruct the biblical definition of these fables and false gospels, to identify their

characteristics, and to understand the spiritual condition of those who promote and embrace them. This examination will be conducted solely through the King James Version, excluding all external theological frameworks to construct a pure, scripturally-derived doctrine.

The Apostle Paul, in his pastoral instructions to Timothy and Titus, repeatedly warns against the corrosive influence of fables within the church. He instructs Timothy, “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Timothy 1:4). He later commands, “But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7). To Titus, the instruction is equally direct, warning against false teachers and commanding, “Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth” (Titus 1:14).

A synthesis of these passages provides a precise definition.

1. **Nature:** Fables are categorized as “profane and old wives” tales, indicating they are secular, common, and lacking in divine origin. They are placed in the same category as “commandments of men.”
2. **Source:** They are explicitly human inventions, contrasted with the truth of God. The Apostle Peter makes this distinction clear: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). The apostolic message is based on eyewitness testimony of historical events; fables are based on human ingenuity and invention.
3. **Effect:** Their effect is uniformly negative. They “minister questions,” leading to endless speculation and debate rather than “godly edifying.” Crucially, giving heed to them is an action that causes one to “turn from the truth.” They are not harmless stories but instruments of apostasy.

Paul issues a specific prophecy concerning a future time when this rejection of truth in favor of fables will become epidemic. He charges Timothy to preach the Word with urgency, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This passage describes a causal sequence. The process begins with a rejection of “sound doctrine.” This rejection is motivated by “their own lusts.” In order to justify these lusts, they actively seek out and accumulate (“heap to themselves”) teachers who will tell them what their “itching ears” want to hear. The final result of this process is a definitive turning away from truth and a turning toward fables. Fables, therefore, are the preferred theology of those who will not endure the moral and doctrinal demands of the Word of God. They are the religious narratives created to accommodate a carnal lifestyle.

While fables represent a corruption of religious teaching in general, the most severe warnings in Scripture are reserved for the corruption of the gospel message itself. The gospel is the non-negotiable core of the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the churches of Galatia, addresses this issue with absolute, unyielding severity. He expresses his astonishment that they

were “so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Galatians 1:6).

Paul immediately clarifies the nature of this “another gospel”: “Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). The phrase “which is not another” signifies that there is no such thing as a legitimate alternative gospel. Any competing message is, by definition, a perversion and a counterfeit. The gospel of Christ—His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection, according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)—is a singular, fixed, and unalterable message. To add to it, subtract from it, or change its core components is to create a damnable heresy.

The judgment upon any who would preach a perverted gospel is the most severe in all of Paul’s writings: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9). The Greek word for “accursed” is *anathema*, meaning to be devoted to destruction. This condemnation is absolute and universal. It applies to Paul himself (“though we”), to supernatural beings (“or an angel from heaven”), and to any other person (“if any man”). The repetition of the curse (“As we said before, so say I now again”) underscores its gravity. This establishes a permanent, unchangeable law: the content of the gospel is fixed, and any deviation from the apostolic message places the preacher under a divine curse.

Paul provides a similar warning to the Corinthian church, expressing his fear that they would be corrupted by false teachers. He warns them of the danger of accepting a counterfeit message, specifically one that presents “another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted” (2 Corinthians 11:4). This verse is critical because it identifies the three core components of a false gospel:

1. **Another Jesus:** A counterfeit Christ who is different from the Christ of the Scriptures. This could be a Jesus who is not fully God and fully man, a Jesus whose sacrifice was insufficient, or a Jesus who does not demand repentance.
2. **Another Spirit:** A counterfeit spirit that mimics the Holy Spirit but produces false signs, false prophecies, and ungodly character.
3. **Another Gospel:** A counterfeit plan of salvation that deviates from the apostolic message of grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.

The final piece of this doctrinal analysis concerns the outward appearance of those who have turned to fables and false gospels. They often maintain a veneer of religiosity. Paul describes these individuals in his prophecy of the perilous last days: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5). Their religion is a hollow shell. It has the external structure, vocabulary, and rituals of godliness, but it is devoid of the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. The “power thereof” is the power that breaks sin, transforms the heart, and produces genuine holiness. A religion of fables and false gospels is, by definition, a powerless religion. The command concerning those who operate within this framework is unequivocal: “from such turn away.” It is a command of separation, not dialogue or ecumenism.

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a complete doctrine on this subject. Fables are humanly-invented, profane narratives that are embraced by those who will not endure sound doctrine, because they cater to their carnal lusts. A false gospel is any message of salvation that deviates from the singular, apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ. Preaching such a message places the preacher under a divine curse. These false gospels invariably present a counterfeit Jesus, a counterfeit spirit, and a counterfeit plan of salvation. The adherents of these systems are characterized by a “form of godliness” that is devoid of the true power of God. The biblical mandate for the believer is to refuse, reject, and turn away from all such fables, false gospels, and powerless forms of religion.



## The Characteristics of False Prophets

To defend against deception, one must be able to identify the agent of deception. The Scriptures do not describe false prophets in vague or abstract terms; they provide a detailed and specific profile of their motives, methods, messages, and the nature of their audience. A systematic topical analysis of the King James Version is therefore required to construct a complete, operational, and biblically-derived list of these characteristics. By isolating the relevant texts and deconstructing the data they provide, it is possible to build a diagnostic tool for identifying false prophets, not based on subjective feeling or supernatural signs, but on objective, verifiable, and scripturally-defined traits. This analysis will proceed without reference to any external authority, relying solely on the biblical text.

The foundational warning given by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount provides the primary framework for this analysis: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16). This statement contains three critical data points. First, their **appearance is a disguise**. “Sheep’s clothing” signifies a deliberate counterfeit of innocence, harmlessness, and legitimacy. They present themselves as part of the flock of God. Second, their **true nature is predatory**. Inwardly, they are “ravening wolves,” driven by a rapacious and destructive instinct. Their goal is not to feed the sheep, but to consume them. Third, their **identification is not based on their disguise, but on their output**. “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” The fruits are the tangible, observable results of their life and ministry. While the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23), the context of a prophet’s work indicates that their primary fruit is their doctrine—the words they produce and the effect those words have on their hearers. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:18). Therefore, the ultimate test of any prophet is the doctrinal and moral character of their teaching when measured against the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, provides a precise analysis of the motive and method of false prophets who would arise from within the church itself. He warns, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). This prophecy reveals two sources of false teachers: those who come from outside (“grievous wolves enter in among you”) and, more insidiously, those who arise from within the leadership of the church (“of your own selves shall men arise”).

The motive is stated with clinical precision: “to draw away disciples after them.” The ultimate goal of the false prophet is not to build up the body of Christ, but to build their own following. They are driven by a desire for personal loyalty, power, and preeminence. They seek to create a faction of disciples who are loyal to them, their personality, and their unique brand of teaching, rather than to Jesus Christ and the unified body of believers. Their method for achieving this is “speaking perverse things.” The word “perverse” signifies that which is twisted, distorted, or turned aside from the truth. This is a critical insight. False prophets do not typically invent entirely new religions from scratch. Instead, they take the established truths of Scripture and twist them. They distort verses, take them out of context, misapply prophecies, and subtly alter core doctrines to support

their own agenda. This perversion of truth is the primary tool used to create a schism and draw followers to themselves.

The Scripture also provides a detailed profile of the target audience for these false prophets. The false prophet does not operate in a vacuum; he thrives by catering to a specific spiritual appetite. Paul prophesied to Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3). This reveals a symbiotic relationship between the deceiver and the willingly deceived. The process begins with the audience. They reach a state where they “will not endure sound doctrine.” The word “sound” means healthy or wholesome. The unadulterated Word of God, with its demands for repentance, holiness, and self-denial, becomes intolerable to them.

Their rejection of sound doctrine is motivated by “their own lusts.” They desire a form of religion that accommodates, justifies, or even celebrates their carnal desires. To satisfy this desire, they actively seek out and accumulate (“heap to themselves”) teachers who will scratch their “itching ears.” They want to be told what they want to hear. They crave a message that is soothing, affirming, and non-confrontational to their sinful lifestyle. The false prophet, therefore, is one who is willing to supply this demand. His message is not derived from a faithful exegesis of the Word of God, but from a market analysis of the lusts of his audience. He is a spiritual merchant who sells a product that his customers are eager to buy, a message that makes them feel comfortable in their sin.

Finally, the Apostle Paul provides an analysis of the rhetoric used by false prophets and a further clarification of their underlying motive. In his letter to the Romans, after giving a command to mark and avoid those who teach contrary to apostolic doctrine, he explains, “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18). This verse deconstructs their methodology. Their ultimate master is not Christ, but “their own belly”—a metaphor for their own appetites, desires, and personal gain, whether financial, social, or otherwise.

Their primary tool for achieving their self-serving goals is a specific style of communication: “good words and fair speeches.” This describes a rhetoric that is smooth, eloquent, persuasive, and pleasing to the ear. It is a form of communication that avoids hard truths, difficult doctrines, and uncomfortable commands. It is designed to be attractive and non-offensive. The target of this polished rhetoric is “the hearts of the simple.” The word “simple” here refers to those who are naive, unsuspecting, and biblically uneducated. They are easily swayed by charismatic personalities and eloquent speech because they lack the doctrinal foundation to discern truth from error. The false prophet exploits this simplicity, using polished and appealing language to bypass critical thought and win the emotional assent of the uninformed.

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a comprehensive, multi-point profile of a false prophet.

1. **Disguise and Nature:** They appear outwardly as innocent sheep but are inwardly predatory wolves.
2. **Primary Motive:** Their goal is self-aggrandizement, specifically to draw away disciples after themselves and to serve their own appetites (“their own belly”).

3. **Doctrinal Method:** They speak “perverse things,” which are twisted or distorted versions of biblical truth, rather than outright fabrications.
4. **Target Audience:** They cater to an audience that has rejected sound doctrine in favor of their own lusts and desires teachers who will satisfy their “itching ears.”
5. **Rhetorical Style:** They use “good words and fair speeches”—eloquent, smooth, and persuasive language—to deceive the hearts of the simple and biblically naive.
6. **The Definitive Test:** Despite their disguise and persuasive speech, they are ultimately known by their “fruits”—the doctrinal and moral outcomes of their teaching when measured against the unchanging standard of the Word of God.

This biblical framework provides a set of objective criteria for the identification of false prophets. The believer is commanded to look past the disguise, ignore the eloquence, and analytically examine the doctrine, the motive, and the effect of the message.

## **The Simple Words of True Ministers**

In direct opposition to the polished rhetoric and persuasive methods of false prophets, the Scriptures present a counter-paradigm for the true ministers of God. An analysis of the biblical text reveals that authentic, divinely-appointed messengers are often characterized by a deliberate rejection of worldly eloquence and oratorical skill. Their authority is not derived from their ability to captivate an audience with human wisdom, but solely from the divine origin and power of the message they deliver. A topical study of the King James Version, focusing on the explicit statements of the apostles and the examples of the prophets, is required to construct a complete doctrine on this subject. This analysis will demonstrate that plainness of speech is not a sign of weakness, but a hallmark of a ministry that seeks to glorify God rather than man.

The Apostle Paul, arguably the most influential minister of the early church, provides the most detailed and explicit defense of this principle. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, a city that highly valued rhetoric and philosophy, Paul systematically deconstructs the world's standards for public speaking. He reminds them, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1). This was a conscious and deliberate choice. He further states, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

This verse contains a critical cause-and-effect relationship. The use of "wisdom of words"—sophisticated rhetoric, philosophical arguments, and eloquent oratory—has a specific, negative effect: it nullifies the power of the cross of Christ. Paul's reasoning is that if a person is persuaded by the skill of the speaker, their faith is placed in the messenger, not the message. Therefore, he adopted a different methodology: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). The true minister's goal is to ensure that the hearer's faith is grounded in a supernatural encounter with the power of God, facilitated by the Holy Spirit, not in an intellectual or emotional response to human eloquence.

Paul's opponents in Corinth apparently used his lack of rhetorical polish as a weapon against him. He acknowledges their criticism directly: "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). The word "contemptible" indicates that his spoken delivery was considered worthy of scorn, unimpressive, and easily dismissed by the standards of the day. Paul does not deny this charge; he embraces it as a validation of his ministry. He states, "But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things" (2 Corinthians 11:6). His claim to authority was not based on his delivery ("rude in speech") but on the divine truth he possessed ("yet not in knowledge"). The simplicity of his speech was a deliberate strategy to strip away all human artifice, leaving only the unadorned truth of the gospel.

This principle is not unique to the New Testament. It is a consistent pattern in God's selection of His primary spokesmen. When God called Moses to be His prophet to deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses's primary objection was his lack of eloquence. "And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am



slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Exodus 4:10). Moses, the man chosen to receive the Law and lead the nation, was by his own admission a poor public speaker. God’s response was not to grant him eloquence, but to assure him that divine authority would be with his mouth (Exodus 4:11-12). This establishes a foundational model: God deliberately chooses a messenger who cannot rely on natural rhetorical talent, ensuring that the power is understood to be from God alone.

Similarly, when the prophet Jeremiah was called, his objection was based on his perceived inadequacy and youth: “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child” (Jeremiah 1:6). The Lord’s response dismisses this human assessment entirely: “But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (Jeremiah 1:7). The prophet’s qualification was not his ability to speak, but his willingness to be a conduit for the exact words God commanded him to deliver. The authority rested entirely in the message, not the messenger.

This consistent biblical pattern—of Paul’s “contemptible” speech, Moses’s “slow tongue,” and Jeremiah’s youthful inability—stands in stark, irreconcilable contrast to the “good words and fair speeches” of the false prophets. The true minister’s lack of polish serves a divine purpose: it removes the human element as a potential object of faith. The false prophet, by contrast, relies on his polished delivery and persuasive rhetoric precisely because his message lacks the intrinsic power of God. He must compensate for a powerless message with powerful words.

The final piece of this doctrinal analysis is a direct warning from Jesus Christ concerning popularity. While false prophets use fair speeches to gain a following, true prophets are often met with rejection. Christ issues a solemn woe that serves as a diagnostic tool for discerning the true from the false based on their public reception: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

This statement is an inversion of worldly logic. Universal acclaim, widespread popularity, and the approval of the masses are not presented as signs of a successful ministry. Instead, they are identified as the historical hallmark of the false prophet. The reasoning is that a true prophet, like Christ Himself, must speak hard truths that confront sin, challenge cultural norms, and call for repentance. Such a message is inherently offensive to the unregenerate world and the carnal church. The false prophet, who speaks what his audience’s “itching ears” want to hear, will naturally be praised and spoken well of. Therefore, a minister’s universal popularity is presented by Christ not as a blessing, but as a “woe”—a sign of grave spiritual danger and a potential indicator of a compromised, man-pleasing message.

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a clear profile of the communication style of a true minister, which serves as a direct contrast to that of a false prophet.

1. **Rejection of Eloquence:** The true minister deliberately avoids “excellency of speech” and the “enticing words of man’s wisdom.”
2. **Focus on Divine Power:** The goal is for the hearer’s faith to be grounded in the supernatural power of God, not in the persuasive skill of the speaker.
3. **Plainness of Speech:** The delivery may be perceived by the world as “rude,” “contemptible,” or “slow of speech.”

4. **Source of Authority:** The authority rests entirely in the divine origin of the message, not in the rhetorical ability of the messenger.
5. **Reception by the World:** The true minister's message will often be met with opposition, whereas universal acclaim and popularity are identified as a warning sign characteristic of false prophets.

This biblical framework mandates that any assessment of a minister must look beyond rhetorical skill and public acclaim. It must prioritize the doctrinal purity and divine power of the message over the charisma and polish of the messenger.

## Filthy Lucre

A final, critical diagnostic for identifying the agents of deception is an analysis of their financial motivations. The Scriptures are not silent on the subject of money and ministry; they provide explicit warnings against a specific corrupting influence identified as “filthy lucre.” This term denotes money or gain that is sordid, dishonorable, or pursued with greedy intent. A topical analysis of the King James Version reveals that a desire for such gain is a primary characteristic of false teachers, while a freedom from it is a non-negotiable qualification for true church leadership. To construct a complete biblical doctrine on this matter, we must systematically examine the relevant commands and examples, allowing the Word of God alone to define the proper relationship between a minister and financial compensation.

The Apostle Paul, in his instructions to Titus concerning the appointment of elders in Crete, provides a direct link between false teaching and the motive of dishonorable gain. After describing the qualifications for a true elder, he warns, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Titus 1:10-11).

This passage provides a clinical diagnosis of the false teacher's operation.

1. **The Action:** They are “unruly and vain talkers and deceivers” who teach things they “ought not.” Their doctrine is unauthorized and erroneous.
2. **The Effect:** Their teaching “subverts whole houses,” meaning it overturns the faith and stability of entire families or households.
3. **The Motive:** The explicit, stated reason for their destructive ministry is “for filthy lucre's sake.”

This is a definitive statement. The desire for dishonorable financial gain is the engine that drives their false ministry. They are not misguided servants of God; they are religious entrepreneurs who have weaponized false doctrine as a means of personal enrichment. The Apostle Peter echoes this charge in his prophecy concerning false teachers: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:3). The word “covetousness” signifies a greedy desire for more. Their method is to use “feigned words”—fabricated, counterfeit teachings—to “make merchandise” of their followers. They view the people not as a flock to be fed, but as a commodity to be exploited for profit.

In direct contrast to this predatory model, the Scriptures establish a strict and absolute financial qualification for all legitimate church leaders. In his instructions to Timothy regarding the qualifications for a “bishop” (an overseer or elder), Paul lists a series of moral requirements, including that he must be “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:3). The same letter outlines the qualifications for deacons, who are also required to be “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:8). In his letter to Titus, Paul repeats this standard for elders, stating they must be “not given to filthy lucre” (Titus 1:7). The Apostle Peter, in his exhortation to the elders, commands them to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Peter 5:2).

The repetition of this command across multiple epistles and addressed to all levels of church leadership (bishops/elders and deacons) establishes it as a universal and non-negotiable standard. A man who is motivated by a desire for money, who is “greedy” for it or “given” to it, is biblically disqualified from holding any office in the church of Jesus Christ. His heart is compromised, and he mirrors the motive of a false teacher, not a true shepherd.

It is scripturally necessary to establish that the terms “bishop” and “elder” in the apostolic era referred to the same office. In Acts chapter 20, Paul calls for the “elders of the church” at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). In his address to this same group of men, he says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [Greek: *episkopos*, from which the word ‘bishop’ is derived]” (Acts 20:28). Paul, therefore, addresses the same men as both elders (*presbuteros*) and overseers/bishops (*episkopos*). The qualifications laid out for a bishop in 1 Timothy 3 are the same qualifications for an elder in Titus 1. The modern concept of a bishop as a hierarchical authority presiding over multiple churches or a diocese is a post-apostolic invention, without foundation in the biblical text. The New Testament model is one of a plurality of elders/bishops serving together as overseers of a single, local congregation. The prohibition against the love of money applied to all of them.

The most powerful testimony against a professional, salaried ministry is the personal, unbending example of the Apostle Paul himself. Paul possessed the “right” as an apostle to receive financial support from the churches he served. He argues this point extensively in 1 Corinthians 9, citing the Old Testament law that “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” and that those who “preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:9, 14). However, after establishing this right, he immediately and forcefully declares that he has refused to use it: “But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me... What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:15, 18).

Paul’s consistent, deliberate practice was to support himself through manual labor so that the gospel would be free. His motive was to remove any potential stumbling block or accusation that he was preaching for personal gain. He reminds the Ephesian elders of his example: “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:33-35). He worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) and taught this as the proper example for church leaders to follow. He commanded the Thessalonians, “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us” (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

The common text used to justify salaried pastors is 1 Timothy 5:17-18: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” To interpret “double honour” as a mandatory, fixed salary is to force Paul to contradict his own explicit, repeated example and command. The word “honour” (*timē*) can



mean price or value, but it also means respect or deference. In the context of the entire chapter, which deals extensively with the care of widows in need, “double honour” is best understood as showing great respect and providing financial help to those elders who, because of their diligent service and lack of other means, are in genuine need. It is a provision for charity, not a mandate for employment. Paul, the author of this verse, was himself an elder who labored in the word and doctrine, yet he explicitly refused to be “chargeable to any.” The establishment of a permanent, professional, salaried clergy is a direct violation of the apostolic pattern.

Finally, the purpose of church collections in the New Testament must be analyzed. When Paul instructed the Corinthian church on giving, the purpose was explicit: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Corinthians 16:1). The money was gathered to support poor believers, especially those suffering from famine in Judea. The entire New Testament model of financial stewardship within the church is centered on charity—supporting the poor, widows, orphans, and those in genuine need. There is no scriptural precedent for collections being used to fund building programs, mortgages, or the salaries of a professional clerical class. The biblical command is clear: “If any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). This applied to all, including the elders who were commanded to labor with their own hands as an example to the flock.

A synthesis of this scriptural data provides a conclusive doctrine on the subject of money and ministry.

1. **Motive of the False:** The desire for “filthy lucre” is a primary, defining motive of false prophets and teachers.
2. **Qualification of the True:** A true church leader (elder/bishop or deacon) is biblically required to be “not greedy of filthy lucre.”
3. **The Apostolic Example:** The Apostle Paul deliberately worked a secular trade to support himself and his ministry, making the gospel “without charge” and setting himself as a direct example for all church leaders to follow.
4. **The Purpose of Giving:** Church collections in the New Testament were for the purpose of charity, specifically to support the poor, widows, and orphans.
5. **The Modern Salary:** The system of a professional, salaried clergy is a post-apostolic development that stands in direct contradiction to the explicit commands and examples of the New Testament Scriptures.

Therefore, any ministry that is structured around the financial enrichment of its leaders, that employs a salaried clergy, or that uses its collections for purposes other than charity, is operating outside of the apostolic pattern established in the Word of God.

## **The Elijah Message**

*The Two Houses: A Final Choice Between Rock and Sand.*

We live in an age of bewildering religious complexity. A landscape fractured into an estimated thirty thousand Christian denominations, each claiming to hold the map to eternal life. Before the sincere seeker stands a dizzying array of cathedrals and storefront churches, of ancient traditions and modern movements, of scholarly theologians and charismatic preachers. The air is thick with

the smoke of competing doctrines, and the cacophony of contradictory interpretations can deafen the soul. It is a marketplace of faith where every vendor guarantees the authenticity of his wares, leaving the buyer in a state of perpetual confusion. This is Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, and her name is Confusion.

Yet, behind this grand illusion of multifaceted truth, the Word of God draws a line with the terrifying finality of a sword's edge. Jesus Christ, the Master Builder, did not speak of a thousand paths or a hundred blueprints. He spoke only of two. Two gates. Two roads. Two trees. Two masters. Two eternal destinies. And at the culmination of His most famous sermon, He presented the ultimate, non-negotiable choice that every soul must make: the choice between two foundations.

This is not an academic exercise. The storm is coming—a tempest of judgment so fierce it will strip away every facade, test every structure, and reveal the true nature of what lies beneath. When the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon the house, it will not matter how beautiful the architecture was, how respected the builder, or how ancient the address. The only thing that will matter is the foundation. On that great and terrible day, there will be only two groups of people: those whose house stands, and those whose house falls. And the fall of the latter will be great.

This, therefore, is a message of utmost urgency. It is a call to examine the ground upon which you have built your eternal hope. For in the calculus of Scripture, there is no middle ground, no third option. There is only the solid Rock laid by Christ and His apostles, and there is the sinking sand of human wisdom. You are standing on one or the other at this very moment. The purpose of this work is to clear away the debris of centuries of religious tradition, to silence the noise of 30,000 competing voices, and to force you to confront the simple, stark, and life-altering reality of these two—and only two—foundations.

### **The Foundation of Sand: The Grand and Beautiful House of Man**

The house built upon the sand is a magnificent structure. It is the product of nearly two millennia of human effort, designed by the greatest philosophical minds and constructed by the most skilled religious craftsmen. Its halls are lined with the writings of Church Fathers, its pillars are carved with the decrees of Church Councils, and its rooms echo with the systematic theologies of the Reformers. It is a house with many wings—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Evangelical—each decorated with its own unique traditions, confessions, and creeds. To all outward appearances, it is a fortress of faith, secure against any storm.

#### **But its foundation is sand.**

This foundation is the collective wisdom of men. It is the fatal assumption that the simple words of Jesus Christ and His apostles are insufficient, that they require a class of spiritual experts, of "divine interpreters," to unlock their true meaning. Every one of the thirty thousand denominations that constitute this great house was founded by a philosopher. Augustine, a brilliant mind steeped in Neoplatonism, laid the groundwork for much of Western theology. Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, and John Calvin, a lawyer trained in scholastic humanism, built upon that

philosophical foundation. John Wesley, an Oxford academic, constructed his own intricate system. Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, the Watchtower Society—each built their own addition to this sprawling complex, claiming a special key to interpretation that the common man could not possess.

The inhabitants of this house are taught to see the Bible through the lens of their particular tradition. They are given a set of glasses, crafted by their founding father, that colors every verse they read. They are told that to understand Scripture, they must trust the scholarship of their leaders, the authority of their church, and the weight of their tradition. They are, in essence, taught to trust in the wisdom of men.

This is a dangerous and intoxicating brew. The book of Revelation warns of the golden cup in Babylon's hand, "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." This is the cup of human religion, a fermented wine that mixes the pure truth of the gospel with the leaven of man-made doctrines. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. A small percentage of poison makes the entire drink deadly. The inhabitants of this house drink deeply from this cup. They become intoxicated with false doctrines, their spiritual senses dulled, their ability to discern the plain truth of the gospel impaired. They are taught a different gospel, which is not another, and they receive a different spirit.

They are taught that salvation is a complex theological formula, a multiple-choice test for which they must have all the correct intellectual answers. They are led to believe that obedience to the simple commands of Christ is "salvation by works," while at the same time being burdened with a host of man-made rituals and traditions that Jesus called "vain worship." They are eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—a mixture of truth and error that leads only to death.

The ministers of this house are often sincere, well-educated men. But their livelihood is tied to the preservation of the structure. They have been trained in their denomination's seminaries, indoctrinated in its philosophy, and are paid to uphold its traditions. Like the Pharisees and scribes of old, to question the foundation would be to risk their reputation, their career, and their entire worldview. And so, the beautiful house of sand continues to expand, its inhabitants secure in their trust of its builders, unaware of the shifting ground beneath their feet.

### **The Foundation of Rock: The Simple House of God**

In stark contrast to the sprawling, ornate palace of human religion stands a simple, unadorned house. This house was not made with hands. It was built by a single carpenter from Nazareth. Its foundation is not a philosophical system, but a person: Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation. This foundation was laid once and for all by Christ and His apostles, and no other can be laid. It is a finished work.

To enter this house, one does not need a seminary degree, a mastery of Greek, or the approval of a religious committee. One must simply believe the gospel and walk through the door. The gospel is not a complex formula, but a story, an eyewitness account recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is the story of how God became flesh, lived a sinless life, and was crucified for the sins of the whole world, fulfilling hundreds of prophecies given centuries in advance. It is the

testimony that He was buried, and on the third day, He rose from the grave, victorious over sin and death.

This is the truth. It is so simple that a child can understand it. It is so powerful that it can save the most broken sinner. The man with a sixth-grade education and the PhD scholar enter this house through the same door, on the same terms.

The response to this gospel is equally simple and clear. It is not a "sinner's prayer" invented by men, but the command given by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). At that moment of faith, repentance, and water baptism, a person is born again of water and of the Spirit. They are justified, sanctified, and cleansed. Their name, written in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, is sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. They are adopted into the family of God, their sins are forgiven, and they have peace with God.

This is the house built on the Rock. Its security does not depend on the intellectual prowess of its inhabitants, but on the finished work of its builder. Those who dwell inside are as safe as Noah in the ark.

The defining characteristic of those in this house is found in the words of Jesus Himself: they are the ones who hear His sayings, and do them. They understand that salvation is entirely a gift of grace through faith, not of works. Yet, because they love the one who saved them, they keep His commandments. Their obedience is not an attempt to earn salvation, but the natural fruit of a transformed heart. They love God, and they love their neighbor. They gather in simple house churches, not to listen to a sermon from a paid professional, but to read the Bible together, to pray for one another, to sing hymns, to break bread, and to collect offerings for the poor. They are not disciples of Luther, Calvin, or Wesley; they are disciples of Jesus Christ alone. They have no divine interpreter standing between them and the Holy King James Bible. They have the Holy Spirit as their guide, and they allow the Bible to be its own commentary.

### **The Elijah Call: Choose This Day**

We now stand at a fork in the road. The storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. The time for indecision is over. The great and final sifting has begun. Like the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel, who stood between the prophets of Baal and the altar of Jehovah, a voice cries out in this wilderness of modern religion: "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

You have been presented with two foundations. You cannot build on both. You cannot hedge your bets. You cannot place one foot on the Rock and one foot on the sand. To mix the two is to build on sand. To add even a little of man's wisdom to the pure foundation of Christ is to corrupt the whole. God will not accept a hybrid foundation. He demands total trust in the Rock, and the Rock alone.

**Therefore, the choice must be made.**



If you believe that salvation is found in a system, that truth is the property of the highly educated, that the traditions of your church are a necessary guide, and that your pastor or priest holds the keys to proper interpretation, then you have chosen your foundation. Your trust is in the house that men have built. If that is your choice, then be consistent. Return to your church. Sit at the feet of your minister. Study the writings of your founders. Submit to the authority of your denomination. Do not attempt to mix the simple, direct path of Christ with the complex, philosophical systems of Babylon. If Baal be god, then follow him.

But if you have heard the voice of the Shepherd in the plain words of the King James Bible; if you believe that Jesus Christ is the only foundation and that His words, along with those of His apostles, are the sole and final authority; if you are willing to forsake the confusing and contradictory traditions of men, no matter how ancient or respected; if you are ready to stand on Scripture alone, without any divine interpreter but the Holy Spirit—then you have chosen a different foundation. If the LORD be God, then follow Him.

This path does not lead to a new denomination or a new human leader. It leads out of Babylon altogether. It leads to reading the four gospels and believing them. It leads to repentance from wickedness and water baptism for the remission of sins. It leads to starting a church in your own home with your family and neighbors, where you take turns reading the pure Word of God. It leads to a life of simple faith, humble obedience, and love for God and man.

The choice is yours. The storm is coming. One house will stand forever. The other will be utterly destroyed. Choose this day whom you will serve. Choose this day on which foundation you will build. Your eternity depends on it.

## **A Call to Separation, Not Confrontation**

This analysis is for those who have discovered, through a direct study of the Holy Bible, that an institutional church system has taught doctrines that are not scriptural. This path is a familiar one, as it involves the dismantling of long-held beliefs in favor of biblical truth.

### **The Process of Doctrinal Realignment**

The discovery that a religious system is unscriptural at its core is a significant event. It often begins with a single verse that contradicts a foundational doctrine. We affirm that when confronted with such evidence, the only correct course of action is to side with the Holy Bible, regardless of the personal or professional cost.

This discovery compels a period of intensive topical Bible study. Our methodology requires a systematic re-examination of all previously held beliefs, starting completely from scratch. This process involves three essential steps for each doctrine:

1. **Begin with a clean slate**, free from the preconceived ideas and biases of the institutional system.

2. **Compile every relevant verse** from the King James Bible on the topic, typically thirty to forty verses, to ensure a comprehensive foundation.
3. **Believe the Bible plainly.** Analysis must begin with the simplest, most direct verses, accepting what they state word for word. These clear verses then provide the framework for interpreting the few complex verses that may have multiple meanings.

This is the three-step topical Bible study method required for a sound, scriptural foundation.

### **A Pattern of Institutional Response**

When scriptural inconsistencies are presented to leaders within institutional denominations, a predictable pattern emerges. We have observed that direct questions regarding doctrinal conflicts are consistently ignored. Instead of addressing the scriptural evidence, the response is to redirect the conversation with leading questions designed to guide the individual back into the system's established framework.

When detailed, biblically-based responses are provided, they are likewise ignored. The institutional representatives will not engage with the scriptural analysis but will continue to ask redirecting questions. This cycle persists until it becomes clear that the individual cannot be guided back into conformity, at which point communication ceases. This pattern demonstrates a refusal to engage with the plain testimony of the Scriptures when it challenges the traditions of the institution.

### **The Scriptural Mandate: Separation**

It took many years to fully realize that these efforts were unnecessary. The New Testament's instruction is not to confront false teachers in prolonged debate but to separate from them. At most, one or two admonitions are necessary, after which we are commanded to avoid them.

If you have recently discovered that your church's teachings are unscriptural, you may be tempted to try and convince everyone within that system of the truths you have learned. We present this analysis to show that such efforts are not the scriptural priority. The matter is between the individual and God; the opinions of others do not alter the truth of the Word. Each person has the liberty to believe as they choose, and our responsibility is to align ourselves with the Bible, not to force others to do so.

We are not your rabbi or your father; we are your brethren in Christ. How a person believes is determined by their view of Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible. We hold that the King James Bible is the final authority over all faith and belief. We are not permitted to say, "I do not believe it" or "It does not mean that." We must read it and believe it.

Others have placed a human authority—a man, a group of men, or a prophet—as an interpreter between themselves and the Bible. This changes everything. We recognize that we are powerless to convert anyone from a position of trusting in human authority to a position of trusting in the sole authority of Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible.

## **The Way Forward: The House Church**

For those convicted by the Bible, the lesson is this: the opinions of men do not matter. Do not seek their approval. Be at peace. You could spend years attempting to persuade those within your former institution, but most will not respond, and some will persecute you. This is why Jesus said He came to bring division, even within houses.

The scriptural path forward is not to reform corrupt systems but to separate from them and establish what is biblically sound. The New Testament model is the house church. This means finding a new family and community who will love you, bear your burdens, break bread with you, pray with you, and rejoice with you. These people are likely not from your previous religious life.

The old wineskins cannot hold the new wine. Christ's commandment is to go into the highways and byways and invite the outcasts. Our mission field is not the church, for the parable of the wheat and the tares teaches that the angels will sort them at the harvest. Our mission field is the unchurched—those who have never heard the gospel. Jesus taught that when you make a feast, you are to invite those who cannot repay you.

Therefore, prepare to show hospitality. Prepare food and invite those whom society has cast out. Inform them that you will offer food and drink and will afterward invite them to listen to a reading from one of the four Gospels. This is the simple model for a house church. There are no sermons, programs, or gimmicks. There is a love feast, where all are welcome to contribute. Everyone is welcome to take turns reading from the Scriptures, without commentary. Everyone is welcome to offer a prayer.

We begin with those who are not Christians, who are outcasts, and who are poor. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. All that is required is humble hospitality. Feed your guests and invite them to listen to a Bible reading.

Later, collections can be taken for the widows, orphans, and hungry who attend. Use all of it for the poor. When any confess that Jesus is the Christ, gently guide them to His commandment to repent and be baptized.

## The Gospel of the House Church: Rejecting the “Sinners Prayer”

The "one true church" is not merely an *organizational structure*; it is the *guardian of the one true gospel*. The institutional, "Babylonian" system (Revelation 17) is not a "harlot" simply because its *form* is corrupt (paid clergy, buildings, rituals); it is a "harlot" because its *message* is corrupt. The "golden cup" in her hand is "full of abominations" (Revelation 17:4)—this is the "wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2), her false gospel, with which she has made "all nations... drunken."

The "Mother" of this system, Rome, has a gospel of *works and sacraments* (penance, purgatory, mass) that "maketh the word of God of none effect" (Mark 7:13). But what of her "daughters," the Protestant and Evangelical institutions that claim to have "come out of her"?

A tragic irony of the Reformation is that while it *restored* the core doctrine of *justification by faith*, it *retained* the core *structure* of Babylon (the clergy/laity divide, the passive sermon, the ritualistic communion). And in the 19th and 20th centuries, these "daughter" churches invented a *new* man-made tradition to replace the old ones: the **"Sinner's Prayer."**

This chapter will prove, by a rigorous topical study of the King James Bible, that the modern "Sinner's Prayer" (and its associated "altar call" and "decision theology") is a *counterfeit conversion ritual*. It is a "plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted" (Matthew 15:13). It is "another gospel" (Galatians 1:8) that offers a false assurance of salvation based on a "vain repetition" (Matthew 6:7) rather than the true, apostolic pattern of faith, repentance, and baptism. The house church, as the *true model*, must reject this counterfeit message and restore the *true apostolic gospel*.

### Deconstructing the Counterfeit: The "Sinner's Prayer"

The "Sinner's Prayer" is the central conversion method of modern Evangelicalism. It is the belief that if a person, in a moment of emotional decision, "invites Jesus into their heart" or "accepts Christ as their personal Savior" by reciting a formulaic prayer, they are, at that moment, "born again" and eternally saved. This "prayer" is then held up as their "proof" of salvation, their "spiritual birthday."

The first and most important test of any doctrine is a simple one: "Where is it written?" We must be Bereans and "search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We must ask: where in the King James Bible did any apostle *ever* lead a lost sinner in a "Sinner's Prayer"?

- Did Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2)? No.
- Did Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8)? No.
- Did Peter with Cornelius (Acts 10)? No.
- Did Paul with the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16)? No.
- Did Paul with the Corinthians (Acts 18)? No.



- Did Paul with the Ephesians (Acts 19)? No.

The "Sinner's Prayer" is *nowhere* to be found in the apostolic pattern. It is a 100% *man-made tradition*. It is a "commandment of men" (Titus 1:14).

So, where did it come from? It is not an ancient tradition. It is a *modern* invention. Its roots are in 18th-century revivalism, and it was popularized and perfected by 19th-century "revivalists" like Charles Finney. Finney, who rejected the biblical doctrine of substitutionary atonement, needed a "new method" (his "new measures") to elicit "decisions" from his mass audiences. The "altar call" and the "anxious bench," which later evolved into the "Sinner's Prayer," were invented as a *psychological tool* to create a *point of decision*. This man-made ritual was then retroactively *given* the authority of the gospel.

This is the "leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:12). It is a human tradition that *nullifies* the actual, biblical commands for salvation.

### Defining the One True Apostolic Gospel (The Message)

If the "Sinner's Prayer" is the counterfeit, what is the *true message*? The apostles did not preach a "feeling" or a "decision"; they preached *facts*.

The Apostle Paul gives the most concise, legal definition of this message in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the gospel* which I preached unto you... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**; And that **he was buried**, and that **he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**."

This is the "one true gospel." It is not a prayer. It is not a feeling. It is a set of *three historical facts* that are validated by *prophecy*:

1. Christ *died* for our sins (the Atonement).
2. He was *buried* (the Proof of His death).
3. He *rose again* the third day (the Proof of His victory and deity).

This is the *only* message the apostles preached. This is the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). It is an announcement of *finished work*, not a request for a *human work* (like reciting a prayer).

### Defining the One True Apostolic Response (The Method)

If the *message* is the "death, burial, and resurrection," what is the *biblical response* to that message?

Again, we must look at the KJV, not at 19th-century traditions. The most famous "conversion" chapter in the Bible is Acts 2. Peter preaches the *true gospel* (the facts of Christ's death and resurrection, validated by prophecy). The crowd hears this *fact-based* message. What is their response?

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37).

This is the most important question a sinner can ask. And Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, gives the *one true apostolic answer*. He does *not* say: "Repeat this prayer after me." He does *not* say: "Just ask Jesus into your heart." He does *not* say: "Just believe, and you are saved."

He gives a three-part *command*: "Then Peter said unto them, **1) Repent**, and **2) be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**, and **3) ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**" (Acts 2:38).

This is the KJV's pattern for salvation. It is not a "Sinner's Prayer." It is **Faith** (which they had, by being "pricked in their heart"), **Repentance** (a command to turn *from* sin), and **Water Baptism** (the specific command *for* the "remission of sins"). This is the "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26).

### Harmonizing the Apostolic Model of Conversion

This three-part pattern (Faith, Repentance, Baptism) is the *only* pattern of conversion in the book of Acts. The "Sinner's Prayer" is absent, but this divine model is universal.

- **The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:35-38):**

- *The Message*: Philip "preached unto him *Jesus*" (the true gospel).
- *The Response*: The Eunuch *believed* (Faith). He then sees water and asks to be *baptized*.
- *The Apostolic Command*: Philip does not give a prayer. He gives a *condition*: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The Eunuch makes his *confession of faith* (the proof of his belief and repentance). They *stop the chariot* and he is *baptized immediately*.

- **The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:30-34):**

- *The Question*: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- *The Apostolic Answer (Faith)*: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
- *Did it end there?* Was this a "faith only" conversion? No. This was the *first step*. What did that "belief" look like in *action*?
- *The Action (Repentance & Baptism)*: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord... And he took them the same hour of the night, and *washed their stripes* [a clear act of repentance]; and was *baptized, he and all his, straightway*."

- The jailer's "belief" was not a "Sinner's Prayer." It was a *saving faith* that *immediately* produced the *fruit* of repentance (washing their wounds) and *obeyed* the *command* of baptism.
- **Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16):**
  - When Saul (later Paul) was converted on the road, he *believed* (Faith) and was *repentant* ("trembling and astonished"). He was a "believer." He was "praying" for three days (Acts 9:9-11).
  - If the "Sinner's Prayer" was the gospel, *Saul was already saved*. He had believed, he had prayed, he had repented.
  - But what did the apostle Ananias say to him? Did he say, "Welcome, brother, I'm glad you said the prayer"?
  - No. He gave him the *apostolic command*: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be *baptized*, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).
  - This is the KJV's "smoking gun." Saul was *still in his sins*—even after believing, repenting, and praying—until the *moment* he was baptized. Baptism, in the KJV's model, is the God-ordained *moment* of "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) and "washing away of sins" (Acts 22:16).

### **Why the "Sinner's Prayer" is "Another Gospel"**

The modern, institutional "Sinner's Prayer" is a "leaven" that corrupts the entire gospel. It is "another gospel" (Galatians 1:8) for four specific reasons:

1. **It is a Man-Made Tradition (Mark 7:13):** As we have proven, it is not in the KJV. It is a "plant" from the 19th century (Matthew 15:13).
2. **It Makes God's Command of None Effect (Mark 7:13):** It *replaces* Christ's own Great Commission command: "He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). It *replaces* Peter's command: "Repent, and be *baptized*... for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). It *replaces* Ananias's command: "be *baptized*, and *wash away thy sins*" (Acts 22:16). The "Sinner's Prayer" is a tradition that *nullifies* the biblical command for water baptism.
3. **It Offers False Assurance:** It deceives billions of people. It gives them a *false hope* of salvation based on a *magical prayer* they recited once. It tells them they are "saved" while leaving them *in their sins* (which are only washed away at baptism, per Acts 22:16). It creates a world full of "still-born" Christians who have "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5).

4. **It is the "Wine of Babylon":** This is the "wine" of the harlot's "daughters." Rome's "wine" is *infant baptism* and *sacramental works*. The Protestant/Evangelical "daughters" rejected that "wine," only to distill their *own*: the "Sinner's Prayer." Both are man-made counterfeits that *replace* the simple, apostolic pattern.

### **Conclusion: The Gospel of the House Church**

The "one true church" (the house church) must preach the "one true gospel." It rejects the "Sinner's Prayer" and the "Altar Call" as the "traditions of men" and the "leaven of the Pharisees."

The gospel of the house church is a return to the *apostolic pattern*.

- **We preach the MESSAGE:** The *facts* of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, "according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- **We give the COMMAND:** We give the same answer Peter gave in Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized... for the remission of sins."

This is the *only* door into the true house. All other "gospels" lead to a different house—a house built on the sand, which *will not* stand in the coming storm.



## The Unifying Standard: Why the KJV is the Only Sword for the House Church

We have now, by the grace of God and the sole authority of the King James Bible, completed our exodus from Babylon. We have rejected the "commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9) that define the 30,000 "harlot" denominations. We have "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4) by forsaking her "temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24), her "Rabbi" class of paid clergy (Matthew 23:8), her counterfeit "Sinner's Prayer" gospel (Galatians 1:8), and her pagan-derived "crumb and a sip" ritual (1 Corinthians 11:21).

We have returned to the "house built upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24), the "one true church" pattern of the apostles. We have restored the "Love Feast," the "daily ministrations" of the deacons, and the "participatory" meeting where "all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8).

But now we face one final, subtle, and catastrophic "leaven" (Matthew 16:12) that threatens to destroy our new foundation. It is the leaven of "many voices." We have fled the "city" of Babylon (confusion), only to risk bringing that "confusion" into our own living rooms.

This chapter is the final, practical admonition for the house church. It is the "firewall" that protects the entire system. The apostolic, participatory model of the house church is *impossible* to sustain without *one, final, unifying, authoritative text*. We will now prove, by the KJV itself, that the King James Bible is the *only* text for this "one true" model, and that all "modern versions" are the "leaven" of the "harlot" system, designed to create the very "divisions" and "Rabbi" class we have just escaped.

### The "Tower of Babel" Effect: Why Multiple Versions *Guarantee* Division

The institutional "sermon" model, which we have rejected, is a "monologue." In that corrupt system, it scarcely matters what "version" the passive "laity" holds. They are silent spectators. Their "Bible" is a prop, used only to "follow along" (or not) as the "one man" on stage reads from *his* "pastor's" text. The "Rabbi" is the only authority.

The house church model, by contrast, is a *dialogue*. It is a "participatory" meeting defined by 1 Corinthians 14:26: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, *every one of you hath a doctrine...*" The authority is not in "one man," but in the *text* that "all" are reading.

Now, consider what happens when this "leaven" of "many versions" is introduced into this participatory meeting. The "Love Feast" is over, and the "apostles' doctrine" begins.

- **Brother A** (holding a KJV) opens the discussion. "Brethren, I have been studying the gospel in Acts 8. Let us read verse 37: 'And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And the eunuch answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"

- **Brother B** (holding a "New International Version" - NIV) immediately stops him. "Brother, my Bible does not *have* that verse. It skips from 36 to 38. That verse is a footnote."
- **Sister C** (holding an "English Standard Version" - ESV) says, "My version also has it in a footnote. It says, 'Some manuscripts add...' It seems your KJV *added* to the Bible."
- **Brother D** (holding a "New World Translation" - NWT) adds, "And my Bible, in John 1:1, says the Word was 'a god,' not 'God.' So the KJV is also wrong there."

What has happened? The "fellowship" (koinonia) has been shattered. The "participatory" study has become a "Tower of Babel" (Genesis 11). This is not the "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3); it is "confusion." The "leaven" of "many versions" has produced its intended "fruit":

- "Strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings," (1 Timothy 6:4)
- "Divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned;" (Romans 16:17)

The house church, designed to "speak the same thing... and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10), is now hopelessly "divided." The Spirit is "quenched" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) because the *foundation* of the "doctrine"—the text itself—is now "sand."

### **The "Rabbi" Re-Created: The Failure of "Scholarship"**

How does this "Babylonian" meeting resolve the conflict? Who is right? Brother A (KJV), or Brothers B, C, and D (NIV, ESV, NWT)?

The "many versions" model has only *one* solution, and it is the very "leaven" we "came out" of. The meeting must "appeal to an expert." The man in the room who "has been to seminary," or "knows Greek," or has the "most expensive Bible software" must now "judge."

He stands and says, "Brethren, this is a complex textual issue. The KJV is based on the 'Textus Receptus,' but our 'older and better' manuscripts, 'Sinaiticus' and 'Vaticanus,' do not contain Acts 8:37. Therefore, the NIV and ESV are more 'accurate' here, and the KJV translators 'added' it..."

Look at what has happened. In an instant, the "house church" is destroyed.

1. **The "Rabbi" is Re-Created:** The "priesthood of all believers" (1 Peter 2:9) is abolished. The authority is no longer in the *Book* that "every one" (1 Cor 14:26) can read, but in the *Man* who can "correct" the Book. This "scholar" has become the "Rabbi" (Matthew 23:8), the "pope" of the living room.
2. **The Berean Model is Destroyed:** The common believer—the "ploughboy" whom Tyndale died for—is now told he *cannot* "search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Why not? Because the "scriptures" in his hand (the KJV) are

"broken," "flawed," and "full of additions." He *must* trust the "scholar" to tell him what is "really" the "Word of God."

3. **Trust is Shifted from God to Man:** This is the sin of "trusting in man" (Jeremiah 17:5). The "scholar's" "Greek" and "manuscripts" have become the "human lens," the "tradition of men" (Mark 7:13) that "maketh the word of God of none effect."

The KJV, as a *single, unifying standard*, is the *only* Bible that preserves the "all ye are brethren" model. In a KJV-only house church, when Brother A reads Acts 8:37, Brothers B, C, and D all read the *same words*. The "judge" (the elder) does not "judge" the *text*; he "judges" the *application* of the text, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The KJV is the only "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) that allows the *whole army* to train with the same weapon. The "modern versions" are a "strife of words," an armory of "broken" and "conflicting" weapons designed to "spoil" the church (Colossians 2:8).

### **The "Pillar of Truth": Why the KJV is the Standard**

The KJV is not chosen from "tradition" (the sin of the "harlot") or from "nostalgia." It is chosen because it is the *only* mainstream English Bible that is based on the *preserved* Word of God, not the *corrupted* texts of "Babylon."

As we established in "A Pillar of Truth: Why We Use the King James Version," there are *two* Bibles in the world, flowing from two *different* streams.

1. **The "Harlot's" Stream (Alexandrian Texts):** The "modern versions" (NIV, ESV, NASB, NWT, etc.) are all "new" translations of a *different* Greek text. This "Alexandrian" text-type is based on a *tiny few* (less than 10%) of "corrupt" and "mutilated" manuscripts (like "Vaticanus" and "Sinaiticus") that were "discovered" in the 19th century. These are the "leavened" texts of the "harlot" system. And what is the "fruit" (Matthew 7:16) of these texts? They *systematically remove or weaken* the "apostles' doctrine":
  - **The Deity of Christ:** In 1 Timothy 3:16, the KJV's "God was manifest in the flesh" is *removed* and replaced with "He who was manifest..."
  - **The Blood Atonement:** In Colossians 1:14, the KJV's "redemption *through his blood*" is *removed*.
  - **The Trinity:** In 1 John 5:7, the KJV's "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" is *removed*.
  - **The Gospel Command:** In Acts 8:37, the eunuch's confession of faith *before* baptism is *removed*.

- **The Lord's Prayer:** In Matthew 6:13, the KJV's "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." is *removed*. These "modern versions" are the "Bibles" of the apostate "daughter" denominations. They are a "famine" (Amos 8:11) of the Word, "leavened" to support their "leavened" doctrines.
2. **The "Bride's" Stream (The Received Text):** The King James Version is based on the "Textus Receptus" (the Received Text). This text is *not* "new" or "recently discovered." It is the text that is supported by over 90% of all 5,800+ manuscripts. It is the text that was preserved by God through the "wilderness" church (Revelation 12:14) for 1,500 years. It is the "providentially preserved" Word of God. The KJV is the "unleavened bread" (1 Corinthians 5:8) of the true house church. It *contains* 1 John 5:7. It *contains* Acts 8:37. It *contains* "through his blood" in Colossians 1:14. It is the "faithful word" (Titus 1:9).

### **A Final Encouragement: "Hold Fast the Faithful Word"**

The house church is the "one true model." The KJV is the "one true text" for that model. The two are inseparable. You cannot run the "apostolic model" (participatory study) with the "harlot's text" (the modern versions).

To "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4) is not just to leave her *buildings*; it is to leave her *texts*.

The KJV is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). A soldier cannot fight if he "doubts" his sword. The "scholar" (the "Rabbi") who "casts doubt" on the KJV, who tells you it is "flawed" or "full of additions," is not a "minister of righteousness." He is a "minister of Satan" (2 Corinthians 11:15), whose "end shall be according to their works." His *job* is to "spoil" you (Colossians 2:8) and return you to a state of *dependence* on "him."

This is the final encouragement: The KJV is the "liberation" text. It is the *only* Bible in English that *frees* the "common man" from the "Rabbi." It is the *only* standard that allows "every one" (1 Cor 14:26) to bring a "doctrine" to the table. It is the *only* text that is "perfect" (Psalm 19:7), "pure" (Psalm 12:6), "settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89), and "preserved" (Psalm 12:7) for the "church in the wilderness."

"Hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught" (Titus 1:9). The KJV *is* that "faithful word." It is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) for the house church, the *one standard* by which "ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (1 Corinthians 14:31).



# **A Practical Guide to Establishing a Biblical House Church**

We have established, through a rigorous and exclusive topical study of the King James Bible, that the modern institutional church system is a counterfeit. It is the "house built upon the sand," a man-made tradition that "maketh the word of God of none effect" (Mark 7:13). We have identified its pagan-derived architecture, its passive "sermon-centric" order of worship, its unbiblical salaried clergy, and its counterfeit "communion" ritual as the clear marks of "Babylon the Great" and her harlot daughters (Revelation 17:4-5).

The logical, emotional, and spiritual response to this revelation is often, "What now?" Having heard the command to "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4), the believer is left standing in the wilderness, free from bondage but without a map. The institutional system, for all its corruption, provides a structure. Its counterfeit "gospel" of the "sinner's prayer" provides a (false) sense of security. Its "pastor" provides a (false) sense of authority. To leave this system is to be cut adrift from the only model of "church" most have ever known.

This chapter is the biblical map. The purpose of this work is not simply to deconstruct the false, but to provide the divine, apostolic blueprint for restoring the true. The King James Bible is not silent on this. It does not merely condemn the false; it provides a complete, detailed, and simple pattern for the "one true church." This pattern requires no buildings, no budgets, and no seminary degrees. It requires only the King James Bible, a humble heart, and a home.

This is a practical, step-by-step guide to establishing a biblical house church, built not on human wisdom, but on the unchangeable commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles.

## **Step 1: The Prerequisite – Individual Separation and Study**

The first step in building a true house is to abandon the false one. You cannot build a new structure on a corrupt foundation. The command of God is not to "reform" Babylon; it is to "come out of her." This is an act of spiritual, intellectual, and often physical separation.

This separation, however, is not into a vacuum. It is a separation *unto* something far greater: the sole authority of the Word of God. The very first action of a believer who has been freed from the "commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9) is to become a Berean. We see this model in Acts 17:10-11: "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

This is the non-negotiable prerequisite. Before you can join or form a church, you must become a student of the Word. You must begin the process of "de-programming" your mind from the "leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:12). This is done through personal, diligent, Topical Bible Study. You must, perhaps for the first time, ask, "What does the KJV *actually* say about salvation? About baptism? About the church? About leadership?" You must "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

This personal study is the act of gathering the sound materials (KJV verses) and reading the blueprint (the apostolic pattern) *before* you begin to build. To skip this step is to risk rebuilding the same Babylonian structure you just fled, only with a different name.

## **Step 2: The Foundation of the Assembly – Hospitality**

Once you have begun to align your own mind with the Word of God, the next step is to find others. The institutional model tells you to rent a building, print a flyer, and "market" your new "service." This is the world's method. The KJV's method is the opposite. It is humble, personal, and domestic.

The second great command is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). The apostolic pattern for building a church *is* the command to love your neighbor, manifested through hospitality.

We see this in the primary qualification for all church leadership. The very first, practical requirement for an elder (bishop) is that he must be "given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Why is this not an optional virtue, but a core requirement? Because his home *was* the church. His "job" was not to prepare a 30-minute sermon; his "job" was to open his door, provide a space, and "feed [pastor] the flock" (1 Peter 5:2) that was literally in his living room.

The action, therefore, is simple. You, the new Berean, must obey this command. You invite people into your home. You do not invite them to "hear you preach." You invite them with a simple, disarming request: "Would you and your family come to our home for a meal on the Lord's day? Afterward, we are going to read the King James Bible together and talk about what it says."

This invitation is the key. It removes all the pagan, institutional barriers. There is no steeple, no pulpit, no "pastor" in a robe, no stained-glass windows, and no pressure. It is merely a meal and a book. You are not inviting them to a "service" but to a "fellowship." You are not asking them to "join" anything; you are asking them to "break bread." This is the apostolic method of evangelism.

## **Step 3: Conducting the First Meeting – The Apostolic Pattern**

The structure of the first house church meeting is not a mystery. The KJV provides a precise, four-part agenda in Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." This is the blueprint for the meeting.

1. **Breaking of Bread:** In the institutional model, the "service" comes first, and fellowship (if any) is relegated to "coffee and donuts" in the foyer afterward. The apostolic model often began with the "Love Feast" (Jude 1:12). Paul, in correcting the Corinthian ritualism, makes it clear they were coming together for an actual meal, rebuking them because "one is hungry, and another is drunken" (1 Corinthians 11:21) and commanding them to "tarry one for another" (1 Corinthians 11:33). The house church meeting is built around a "potluck" style meal. This is the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:46). This act of sharing food and "eating their meat with gladness" (Acts 2:46) is the practical, tangible expression of "fellowship."

2. **Fellowship:** This is the *koinonia*, or sharing. It is not just sharing food; it is sharing life. As you eat together, you bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). You learn of your brother's needs, his struggles, his joys. This is where the church becomes a true spiritual family, not a collection of strangers in a pew.
3. **Prayers:** After the meal, the assembly turns to collective prayer. This is not a "pastoral prayer" performed by one man. This is the body praying together, as seen in Acts 4:24, where they "lifted up their voice to God with one accord." You pray for the needs discovered during the fellowship. You pray for wisdom. You pray for the sick (James 5:14).
4. **Apostles' Doctrine:** This is the centerpiece of the meeting, and it is the most radically different from the institutional model. This is *not* a sermon. A sermon is a passive monologue. The "apostles' doctrine" was a participatory, edifying, KJV-based discussion. We will explore this in detail in the next chapter, but the command is "when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine... Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:26). A man, prepared by his own Topical Bible Study, may open the discussion: "Brethren, I have been studying the topic of 'forgiveness.' I found these verses in Matthew 18 and Ephesians 4. How do we harmonize these?" Another man may then share a verse, and another an insight, all with the KJV as the only textbook, until the body is "edified."

This is the entire meeting. It is simple, profound, and 100% biblical. It requires no script, no program, no professional leader. It requires only the Holy Spirit, the Holy Bible, and humble hearts.

#### **Step 4: Maturing the Assembly – Appointing Leadership**

As the house church meets and grows in grace, a natural leadership structure will emerge, just as it did in the New Testament. The apostle Paul did not hire "pastors" from a seminary; he appointed "elders in every city" (Titus 1:5) from *within* the congregations themselves.

The appointment of leadership is not a "job interview" or a "denominational vote." It is a process of *recognition*. The Holy Ghost *makes* men "overseers" (Acts 20:28); the church's job is simply to *recognize* who the Spirit has already chosen and qualified.

- **Recognizing Elders (Pastors/Bishops):** As the church meets, who are the men who are "given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2), opening their homes? Who are the men who are "apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2), consistently bringing "sound doctrine" to the participatory study? Who are the men who are "holding fast the faithful word" and are able to "convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9)? Who are the men who "ruleth well his own house" (1 Timothy 3:4)? These are the emerging elders. The church, in unity, recognizes these men and submits to their biblical oversight (Hebrews 13:17). Note that the model is *always* "elders" (plural). The "one-man pastor" system is a pagan, hierarchical invention.
- **Recognizing Deacons:** Likewise, the church will recognize men (and women, as with Phebe in Romans 16:1) who are "grave" and "faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:8-11).



These are the "deacons," or servants. Their primary role is to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2)—that is, to manage the *practical* and *financial* needs of the church. They are the ones who manage the "collection for the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:1), ensuring the widows, orphans, and poor are cared for, thus freeing the elders to focus on the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4).

### **Step 5: The Mission – Multiplication, Not Centralization**

In the institutional model, "success" is defined as *centralization*. A growing "church" buys a bigger building. The "pastor" becomes a CEO, managing a large staff. This is a corporate model, not a biblical one.

The biblical model of "success" is *multiplication*. When a house church grows too large to fit in a living room, it does not buy a building. It *divides*. It is a living cell, and it multiplies by cell division.

A man who has been recognized as an elder in the first church, who is also "given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2), is now qualified to "pastor" a new flock. The original church lays hands on him and sends him out (Acts 13:3), and he begins a *new* house church in his own home, inviting *his* neighbors.

This is the apostolic pattern. This is how the gospel "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). It was not a "top-down" corporate structure. It was a "bottom-up," viral, decentralized network of house churches, each one a self-sufficient, self-governing, self-replicating assembly. This model is resilient. It cannot be "decapitated" by persecuting a "CEO." It cannot be stopped by zoning laws. It is the "kingdom of God... like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Luke 13:21).

### **Conclusion: The House Built Upon the Rock**

This is the practical, step-by-step guide to restoring the one true church. It is simple, it is reproducible, and it is 100% derived from the King James Bible.

1. **Separate** from Babylon and become a student of the KJV.
2. Practice **Hospitality** and invite others for a meal and Bible reading.
3. Conduct the meeting based on the **Apostolic Pattern** (Fellowship, Breaking of Bread, Prayers, and Participatory Doctrine).
4. **Recognize** (do not hire) plural, unpaid elders who guard the flock and deacons who serve the poor.
5. **Multiply** by division, not centralize by building.

This is the "house built upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24). It is the pattern given by the Master Builder. When the storm of God's judgment comes, this is the only house that will be left standing.



## The Order of Worship: Restoring the Participatory Meeting

We have established that the modern, institutional "order of worship" is a pagan-derived tradition of men. It is a passive, "sermon-centric" performance that "maketh the word of God of none effect" (Mark 7:13). It is built upon the Greco-Roman model of the "sophist" or "orator," a single, charismatic speaker who performs for a silent, passive audience. This unbiblical structure creates a "clergy/laity" divide that Christ Himself forbade, commanding His disciples, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren... Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:8, 10).

The modern church, in its fear of "chaos," has created a "tomb" and called it "order." To enforce a human-derived sense of "decency," they have "quenched the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and silenced the body of Christ. They have systematically violated the very commands of God regarding the assembly.

This chapter will lay out the *true* biblical "order of worship" from the King James Bible. We will deconstruct the apostolic commands to discover the divine model. We will show how this model, far from being chaotic, is a divinely-inspired system that harmonizes two essential principles: the *full participation* of the body (1 Corinthians 14:26) and the *doctrinal protection* of the elders (Titus 1:9). This is the model that trains every man to be a Berean, creates a doctrinally-sound flock, and builds up the body of Christ in truth.

### The Foundation: The Synagogue Model

To understand the apostolic church, we must first understand the synagogue. Christ and the apostles did not invent their meeting style from a vacuum; they were Jews who operated within the established, God-ordained pattern of the synagogue. The synagogue was *not* a "sermon hall" like a modern church. It was a *reading room*, a *discussion hall*.

We see this pattern perfectly in Luke 4. Jesus, "as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). He reads a portion of Isaiah. Then, "he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him" (Luke 4:20). In that culture, a man *stood* to read (out of respect for the Word) and *sat* to teach (to begin a discussion). The "sermon" He then gives is a short, sharp, provocative statement: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

What happens next? A passive, silent audience? No. A *dialogue* erupts. "And all bare him witness, and wondered... And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22). This dialogue then becomes a heated "reasoning" (Luke 4:23-27) that results in the whole synagogue rising up to cast Him out. This was not a polite, 30-minute monologue; it was a robust, participatory, and dangerous engagement with the Word of God.

We see this same pattern with the Apostle Paul. His method was not to "preach at" people, but to "reason with" them. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days *reasoned with them out of the scriptures*, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have

suffered, and risen again from the dead" (Acts 17:2-3). This is the apostolic model: participatory, KJV-based reasoning. This is the model the house church is built to restore.

### **The Apostolic Command: "Every One of You Hath..." (1 Corinthians 14)**

If the synagogue was the *model*, 1 Corinthians 14 is the *manual*. In this chapter, Paul corrects the Corinthian church, which was abusing its spiritual liberty and falling into chaos. But in correcting their *abuse*, he simultaneously *confirms the correct practice*.

The modern pastor, in his fear, reads 1 Corinthians 14 and sees only the "chaos." He focuses on the "disorder" and uses it as a justification to shut down all participation, replacing it with his own monologue. This is a profound error. The *problem* in Corinth was not *that* the body was participating; the problem was that they were doing so "indecently" and "out of order," all speaking at once, and without doctrinal clarity.

Paul's solution was not to *end* participation, but to *regulate* it. He gives the divine blueprint for an orderly, participatory meeting: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, *every one of you hath* a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:26).

This verse is the death-knell of the modern sermon. The apostolic meeting was *not* a "one-man show." It was a gathering where "every one" was expected to come *prepared* to contribute from their own study and walk with God. One man, led by the Spirit, would share a "psalm" (a song). Another, from his personal Topical Bible Study, would share a "doctrine" (e.g., "Brethren, I have studied the KJV's teaching on 'forgiveness' this week..."). Another would share an "interpretation" or "revelation" (a spiritual insight into the Word).

The purpose of this "many-to-many" ministry, rather than the institutional "one-to-many" monologue, was simple: "Let all things be done unto *edifying*" (building up). The goal is for the *whole body* to be built up, not for one man (the "pastor") to be showcased.

### **The Safeguard: "Let All Things Be Done Decently and in Order" (1 Corinthians 14)**

This is the verse that institutional pastors use to *justify* their sermon-monologue, claiming it is the *only* way to maintain "order." They have, in fact, created a *false dilemma*: either we have a "pastor" and "order," or we have "participation" and "chaos."

The KJV presents a third, perfect option: *participatory order*. Paul's commands in 1 Corinthians 14 are practical rules for *regulating* the participation, not *eliminating* it.

- **"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret."** (1 Corinthians 14:27) - He doesn't forbid tongues; he *orders* them: "by course" (one at a time) and *with* interpretation (so the body is edified).

- **"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."** (1 Corinthians 14:29) - He doesn't forbid prophecy; he *orders* it: "two or three" (not everyone at once) and with *accountability* ("let the other judge").
- **"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."** (1 Corinthians 14:31) - He *re-affirms* the participatory model ("ye may *all* prophesy") and gives the rule: "one by one."

The capstone command is 1 Corinthians 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in order." This command is the *result* of following the *participatory* rules ("one by one," "let one interpret," "let the other judge"). It is not a *pretext* for *abolishing* participation.

### Harmonizing Participation with Authority: The Elder's True Role

This, then, is the central question: who is the "referee"? Who is the "judge" (1 Cor 14:29)? Who ensures the "doctrine" being shared is *sound* doctrine?

The institutional church answers: "The Pastor! He is the only one with the authority, the education, and the 'calling' to discern truth. Therefore, to prevent error, *only he* is allowed to speak." This is the logic of Babylon. It is the logic of fear. It is a "power grab" that silences the body (violating 1 Cor 14:26) in the name of "protecting" it.

The KJV gives a different, and far superior, answer: the **Elder (Pastor/Bishop)**.

As we established in our protocol, the elder's primary role is not to be a "performer" (a sermon-giver) but a "protector" (a doctrinal guard). His job qualifications are not "eloquence" but "sound doctrine."

- **Titus 1:9:** An elder *must* be "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound doctrine* both to *exhort* and to *convince the gainsayers*."
- **Acts 20:29-31:** Paul warns the *elders* to "take heed" and "watch," because "grievous wolves" and "men speaking perverse things" will arise. The elder's job is to *stop them*.

Now, let us harmonize these two truths. How does a house church meeting work? The body is *participatory* (1 Corinthians 14:26). The elder *sits with* the body as a "fellow-brother," but he is also the "overseer" (bishop). A brother shares a "doctrine" (1 Cor 14:26). Let us say he brings a Topical Bible Study on forgiveness. The elder, "holding fast the faithful word," listens. The doctrine is sound. The elder "exhorts" (affirms) him. The body is edified. Another brother (perhaps a visitor) then shares *his* "doctrine": "That is true, but my old pastor taught that forgiveness means God *forgets* our sins, but they are not truly 'washed away' until we do penance." At this moment, the *elder's role activates*. He is not a passive listener. He is the "guard." He must now "convince the gainsayer" (Titus 1:9). He does not "seize the pulpit"; he simply speaks into the dialogue: "Brother, let us test that doctrine with the KJV (Acts 17:11). The KJV says in Acts 22:16, 'arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.' It says in Hebrews 8:12, 'their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' And in Romans 4:8, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not

impute sin.' The doctrine of 'penance' is a man-made tradition that denies the KJV's testimony. We must reject it." This is the *true* biblical "order." The body is free to participate, and the elder is present to "judge" (1 Cor 14:29) and "guard" (Titus 1:9).

### What if the Heretic Persists?

What happens if this visitor, this "gainsayer," refuses to be convinced? What if he brings this same false doctrine week after week, "subverting" the house (Titus 1:11)? The KJV is explicit. The elder's role moves from "guard" to "gatekeeper."

- **Titus 3:10:** "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition *reject*." The elder confronts the man "by sound doctrine." That is the "first admonition." If he brings it again, he is warned again. That is the "second admonition." If he persists, he is "rejected" (excommunicated).
- **Romans 16:17:** "Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark them* which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*."
- **2 John 1:10:** "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, *receive him not into your house*, neither bid him God speed."

The "order" is maintained not by *silencing* the body (the institutional model), but by *empowering* the body to study, and *authorizing* the elders to *expel* the "leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

### A Practical Walk-Through of a House Church Meeting

Based on this KJV framework, a biblical meeting (Acts 2:42) flows with a divine, simple logic:

1. **The Gathering & Love Feast:** The meeting begins with the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:46). This is a full, shared, "potluck" meal. This is the "fellowship" (koinonia). Believers "tarry one for another" (1 Cor 11:33), share their lives, and bear one another's burdens.
2. **Prayers:** The body collectively turns to prayer, led by one or more of the men.
3. **Participatory Study (Apostles' Doctrine):** An elder, or any man, opens the KJV. "Brethren, I have been studying the topic of 'The Lake of Fire' this week. I am struggling with Revelation 14:11. Let's start with the simple verses..."
4. **The Body Edifies (1 Cor 14:26):**
  - One brother says, "Let's read Malachi 4:1-3, 'all that do wickedly, shall be stubble... and they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet.'"
  - Another says, "And Romans 6:23, 'For the wages of sin is death...'"



- Another shares, "Here is Psalm 37:20, 'the wicked shall perish... into smoke shall they consume away.'"
5. **The Elder Guards (Titus 1:9):** A visitor says, "But my pastor taught that 'for ever and ever' in Revelation 14 *proves* eternal, conscious torment." The elder steps in: "Brother, we must harmonize that. How do we harmonize 'ashes under the feet' with 'conscious torment'? The KJV must be our guide. The 'simple' verses (Malachi, Romans) define the 'complex' (Revelation). The 'smoke' of their torment ascends forever as a *memorial* of a *finished* judgment, just as the 'smoke' of Sodom (a city that is *not* still burning) 'ascended' (Genesis 19:28). The punishment is 'everlasting' in its *result* (death), not its *process* (tormenting)."
6. **Conclusion:** The meeting concludes when the body has been "edified."

This model is the *only* one that fulfills all of the KJV's commands. It trains every man to be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15). It creates a doctrinally-tough, resilient flock that is "no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). It destroys the "clergy/laity" divide and restores Christ as the only "Master." This is the "decent" and "orderly" assembly of the saints.

## **The Lord's Supper: Restoring the "Love Feast"**

We have now established, by the sole authority of the King James Bible, the "one true" pattern for the church. We have forsaken the "harlot" institution of "Babylon" (Revelation 17:5) and its 30,000 "daughter" denominations. We have "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4) and returned to the "house built upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24): the house church. We have rejected the passive, pagan "sermon" (a "commandment of men") and restored the participatory, apostolic "order of worship" (1 Corinthians 14:26). We have rejected the counterfeit "Sinner's Prayer" (a "vain repetition") and restored the "one true gospel" of faith, repentance, and baptism "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Now, we must examine the "Achilles' heel" of the entire institutional system. We must deconstruct the single, most visible, tangible proof of its apostasy. This is the "litmus test" that, by itself, exposes the 30,000 denominations as fraudulent counterfeits. This is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The modern institutional church—whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, high-church or low-church—offers its people a sterile, symbolic, and pagan-derived "ritual" of a crumb and a sip. This "vain worship" (Matthew 15:9), performed by a "Rabbi" class of paid clergy, is a hollow mockery of the command given by Christ. It is the very "golden cup" of the "harlot," which appears "holy" but is "full of abominations" (Revelation 17:4).

The house church, in its restoration of the apostolic pattern, does not "reform" this ritual; it "rejects" it (Titus 3:10) as a "plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted" (Matthew 15:13). We do not "fix" the counterfeit; we restore the original, biblical "Love Feast."

### **The Counterfeit Ritual vs. The Biblical Meal**

The institutional "communion" is a somber, silent, individualistic ceremony. A "Rabbi" in a robe or suit, standing on a stage, dispenses a tiny, styrofoam-like "wafer" or a "crumb" of bread, followed by a thimble of juice, often in a pre-packaged plastic cup. It is a ritual of spiritual starvation, a perfect emblem of the "famine... of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11) that defines the Babylonian system.

This entire practice is a "commandment of men" (Matthew 15:9) that has no foundation in the King James Bible. We must conduct a topical study to deconstruct this counterfeit and prove, by the KJV alone, what the Lord's Supper truly is.

### **What the Lord's Supper is NOT:**

1. **It is NOT a "Sacrifice" (The "Mass" Heresy):** The "Mother of Harlots" (Revelation 17:5), the Roman Catholic institution, invented the doctrine of "transubstantiation" and the "sacrifice of the Mass." This is the "doctrine of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1) that a "priest" (a "Rabbi") "re-sacrifices" Christ on an "altar" to "make" the bread and wine into His literal body and blood. This is a satanic blasphemy against the finished work of the cross. The KJV is absolutely clear that Christ's sacrifice was "once for all."

- "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*." (Hebrews 10:10)
- "But this man, after he had offered *one sacrifice for sins for ever*, sat down on the right hand of God;" (Hebrews 10:12)
- "Now where remission of these is, there is *no more offering for sin*." (Hebrews 10:18) The sacrifice is *finished*. Any system that claims to "re-offer" it, even "unbloodily," is an "accursed" (Galatians 1:8) counterfeit.

1. **It is NOT a "Sacrament" or a "Mystical Ritual":** The "daughter" harlots (the Protestant denominations) rejected the "Mass" but kept the "leaven." They kept the "priest" (calling him a "pastor") and kept the "ritual" (the crumb and sip). They invented new "leaven," such as "consubstantiation" (Lutheranism) or other mystical "sacramental" views, where grace is somehow "mysteriously" imparted through the ritual. The word "sacrament" is not in the Bible. It is a "commandment of men" (Matthew 15:9). The KJV's command is simple: "this do *in remembrance* of me" (Luke 22:19). It is a *memorial*, not a "means of grace." Grace is received by *faith* (Ephesians 2:8), not by *ritual*.

1. **It is NOT a "Somber, Funeral-like" Event:** The institutional "communion" is almost always a funereal, somber, and silent affair, filled with "vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7) and mournful music. This is a pagan-derived "mystery" rite. The KJV, by contrast, defines the *opposite* atmosphere for the true "breaking of bread":

a. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat *with gladness and singleness of heart*," (Acts 2:46) The true supper was not a "funeral"; it was a "feast." It was an act of *gladness*, celebrating the *victory* of His resurrection and the *joy* of fellowship.

2. **It is NOT an "Individualistic" Act:** The modern "harlot" system, especially in its Evangelical "daughter" forms, has perfected the art of isolation. Believers are handed individual, pre-packaged, hermetically-sealed plastic cups with a wafer on top. They sit in silent, individual isolation. This is the *epitome* of the very sin Paul condemned in Corinth. The institutional model *is* the Corinthian error, codified as "worship."

### **The "Litmus Test" of 1 Corinthians 11: The "Smoking Gun"**

The entire institutional counterfeit is exposed as a fraud by a simple, honest reading of 1 Corinthians 11. This chapter is the "litmus test" that no "Rabbi" of the 30,000 denominations can pass.

Paul is not writing to *institute* a new ritual. He is writing to *correct* the *abuse* of the *meal* they were already practicing. His *entire* argument is nonsensical if they were only eating a symbolic crumb.

1. **The Proof of a Full "Supper":** Paul states the problem: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one

taketh before other *his own supper*: and one is *hungry*, and another is *drunken*." (1 Corinthians 11:20-21). This is the "smoking gun." It is *impossible* for one man to be "hungry" and another "drunken" if the "supper" was a crumb and a sip. This single verse, by itself, destroys all 30,000 institutional denominations. It proves, beyond any "private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20), that the Lord's Supper was a full, actual *meal* where *real food* and *real drink* were consumed.

2. **The Proof of a "Charitable" Meal:** What was the *sin*? Why was Paul angry? Was it because they were "eating"? No. It was because they were *not sharing*. "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and *shame them that have not*?" (1 Corinthians 11:22). This was a "potluck" style meal. The rich were arriving early, bringing their "own supper" (abundant, fine food) and "taking it before other" (eating it all). The poor, who arrived later (perhaps after finishing work) and "had not" (brought little or no food), were left "hungry." This was not "fellowship" (*koinonia*); it was a humiliation of the poor. It was the "high school clique" (as we will discuss in the next chapter) at its worst.
3. **The Apostolic Solution: "Tarry One for Another"** If the "meal" was the problem, Paul's solution would have been simple: "Stop this carnal meal! From now on, just have a symbolic crumb and sip so no one can be a glutton." He did the *opposite*. He did not abolish the meal; he commanded them to *restore its true purpose*. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together *to eat, tarry one for another*." (1 Corinthians 11:33). The command is not "stop eating." The command is "wait for each other!" It is a command to *share* the food, to restore the *fellowship* and *charity* of the meal. What about the "eat at home" verse? "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation" (1 Corinthians 11:34). The "Rabbi" of the institution rips this verse out of context to "prove" the meeting *isn't* for eating. This is a "perversion" (Acts 20:30) of the text. Paul is speaking to the *gluttons*. He is saying, "If you are so ravenously 'hungry' that you cannot 'tarry' for your poor brother, then 'eat at home' *first*!" He is rebuking their *selfishness*, not the *supper*. The command in verse 33 is the primary one: "when ye come together *to eat*..."

### Rebuilding the Truth: The "Feast of Charity"

The KJV, when studied topically, reveals the true "Lord's Supper." It is not a "ritual" at all. It is the "breaking of bread" that *is* the "fellowship."

1. **It is a "Feast" (Jude 1:12):** The apostle Jude confirms the practice of the early church. He warns of false teachers who have infiltrated the assembly: "These are spots in your *feasts of charity*, when they *feast* with you, feeding themselves without fear..." The



KJV itself *names* the gathering. It is a "feast of charity" (or "agape feast"). The institutional "crumb" is a "famine," not a "feast."

2. **It is a "Meal" (Acts 2:46):** The first church in Jerusalem provides the pattern: "And they, continuing daily... and breaking bread from house to house, did *eat their meat* with gladness and singleness of heart," (Acts 2:46). The "breaking of bread" (the term for the "supper") is *explicitly* defined as "eating their meat."
3. **It is a "Memorial" (Luke 22:19):** As they eat this "feast of charity" and "eat their meat," they are obeying Christ's *purpose* for the meal: "this do *in remembrance* of me" (Luke 22:19). It is a "memorial," not a "sacrifice" or a "sacrament."
4. **It is "Fellowship" (Acts 2:42):** The "breaking of bread" is listed *alongside* "fellowship" because it *is* the "engine" of fellowship. True *koinonia* (shared life) is not a handshake in a foyer. It is sharing your *life* and your *food* ("your meat") with your spiritual family around a table.

### How the House Church Conducts the Supper

The house church, therefore, does not "invent" a new way. It simply *reads the KJV and obeys it*. The Lord's Supper is the "potluck dinner" or "Love Feast" that forms the *foundation* of the assembly.

When the brethren gather "from house to house" (Acts 2:46) on the Lord's day (Acts 20:7), they bring their "meat" (food and drink) to share. This *is* the "fellowship" and the "breaking of bread." It is a joyous, and at times loud, "feast" characterized by "gladness" (Acts 2:46).

During this meal, the brethren "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The elder (the "overseer" of the house) may take a loaf of bread, "bless it," and "break it," passing it to all, reminding the family that the Lord's body was broken for them. As they drink the "fruit of the vine" (wine or juice) *with their meal*, they remember that His blood was shed for the "remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The "supper" is not a separate, 30-second ritual *before* or *after* the fellowship; the supper *is* the fellowship. It is the practical, tangible act of "love" and "charity" (feeding one another) that fulfills the command. It is not a somber "funeral" but a joyous "feast" that celebrates His *resurrection* and finished work.

This simple act of obedience—restoring the full meal—is a radical act of separation from Babylon. It destroys the "Rabbi" class, as no "priest" is needed to dispense a "holy" crumb. It restores "fellowship" from a handshake in a foyer to a shared life at a table. It is the visible "ID card" of the true church, a "Love Feast" that the counterfeit institution, with its passive audience of

thousands, cannot, and will not, replicate. This is the "Achilles' heel" that proves they are not the church of the King James Bible.

## The Mark of the Disciple: True Fellowship vs. the Institutional Counterfeit

On the night of His betrayal, in the final hours before His "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10) sacrifice, Jesus Christ gave His disciples a new, final commandment. This command was not a suggestion. It was not a minor point of theology. It was to be the single, identifying "mark" of His true followers. It was the "ID card" by which the entire world—pagan and religious—could distinguish His "one true church" from the "harlot" counterfeits of the world.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34-35)

This "love" (Greek: *agape*) is not the "love" of the world. It is not a sentimental feeling, an abstract emotion, or a bumper sticker. It is not "superficial small talk." The KJV defines this "love" as a *practical, tangible, costly action*. The apostle John, who recorded Christ's command, later defined it explicitly:

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but *in deed and in truth*." (1 John 3:17-18)

This is the test. The "mark" of the disciple is "love in deed and in truth." This love is twofold: it is expressed in *intimate fellowship* and *radical charity*.

We have established that the institutional, 30,000-denomination system is a counterfeit. This chapter will prove that the institutional "church" *cannot*, by its very design, obey this "new commandment." Its structure is the *antithesis* of love. It is a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). It is a system built to "love in word, neither in tongue."

We will prove, by the KJV alone, that the biblical house church is the *only* model that is structurally *designed* to fulfill this commandment "in deed and in truth," proving itself to be the "one true" pattern for Christ's disciples.

### The Institutional Failure: Anonymity and "Love in Word"

The modern institutional "church" is not a "family." It is an auditorium. It is a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). Its "order of worship" is a passive, "sermon-centric" performance that *structurally prevents* the practice of "love one to another."

Consider the experience of the institutional "service." A person (a visitor, or even a 10-year "member") arrives and files anonymously into a row of pews or theater seats. They sit, facing the back of someone else's head. They are, by design, *spectators*. They are commanded to be silent and *watch* a "show" performed by a "professional Rabbi" (Matthew 23:8) and a "worship team"

on an elevated stage. How, in this structure, can anyone "love one another"? It is impossible. They are not even permitted to *speak* to one another.

When this "service" ends, what is the "fellowship" that is offered? It is, at best, a few minutes of chaotic, superficial "small talk" in a foyer, holding a cup of coffee and a donut. This is not *koinonia* (fellowship); it is a social mixer.

As the user of this protocol has rightly observed, this entire system breeds the very "cliques" and "divisions" (1 Corinthians 1:10) that defined their carnal high school experience. The "popular" members (the wealthy tithers, the long-established families, the "pastor's" inner circle) are seen, known, and greeted. But the vast majority—the "unpopular," the poor, the visitor, the struggling, the quiet—slip out the door completely "unrecognized." They arrive "invisible" and they leave "invisible." They have not been "loved"; they have been "counted" (as an attendance number).

The institutional church is a cold, lonely place for "the least of these." It is a direct violation of the command of James, who rebuked the "assembly" for this very sin: "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing... but say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves...?" (James 2:2-4).

The institutional model, with its "respect" for the wealthy "tither" and its "Rabbi" who must be paid, is structurally built on this "respect of persons." It is a system *incapable* of fulfilling Christ's "new commandment."

### **The Institutional Failure: Financial "Love" for the Institution**

The "love" of the institutional "harlot" is proven to be a counterfeit by what she does with her money. She "maketh merchandise" of the flock (2 Peter 2:3).

She preaches an abolished Old Covenant "tithe," a "commandment of men" (Matthew 15:9), to collect funds "by necessity" (a violation of 2 Corinthians 9:7). And where does this money go? Does it fulfill the command of 1 John 3:17, "whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need...?"

No. The "brother" has *great* need. The "widow" and "fatherless" (James 1:27) are in their very pews. But the institution's "love" is for *itself*. The *first* priority of the institutional budget is "overhead." 80%, 90%, or even 100% of the collection goes to two things the KJV never commands:

1. **The "Rabbi's" Salary:** This is the "filthy lucre" (1 Peter 5:2) required to pay the "hireling" (John 10:12) who "serves his own belly" (Romans 16:18).
2. **The Building's Mortgage:** This is the "temple made with hands" (Acts 17:24) that God "dwelleth not in."



The institutional system is a "den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13)—it *steals* the money that, according to the KJV, belongs *only* to the poor, and uses it to fund its own unbiblical structure. This is the *opposite* of "love in deed."

### **The House Church Restoration: "Love in Deed and in Truth"**

The biblical house church is not an "alternative model"; it is the *only* model that is structurally *designed* to fulfill Christ's "new commandment" of love. It replaces the institutional "love in word" with the apostolic "love in deed and in truth."

**1. Intimacy Replaces Anonymity:** The first fulfillment of "love" is *intimacy*. In the house church model, there is no "auditorium." There are no "pews." There are no "spectators." The church "meets from house to house" (Acts 2:46). You cannot be "invisible" in a living room of fifteen people. You are not facing the back of a head; you are facing your *brother* and *sister*. You are *known*. Your needs, your struggles, your sins, and your victories are shared by the *family*. When one "member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). This is not a theory; it is the *literal reality* of the house church.

**2. The Meal Replaces the "Small Talk":** The *engine* of this intimate fellowship is the "Love Feast." As we proved in the previous chapter, the Lord's Supper *is* a full, shared "potluck" meal (1 Corinthians 11:21-34; Acts 2:46; Jude 1:12). When a family shares a full meal together (daily, or at least weekly), "superficial small talk" becomes impossible. True *koinonia* (fellowship) happens over the table. This *is* the practice of "love one to another." It is the practical, tangible act of "tarrying one for another" (1 Corinthians 11:33) and feeding your brother "in deed."

**3. The Dialogue of Love (Participatory Study):** The house church restores the "participatory" meeting commanded by the KJV, which is itself an act of "love." The "sermon" is a loveless monologue. The house church obeys 1 Corinthians 14:26: "when ye come together, *every one of you* hath a doctrine, hath a psalm, hath a revelation..." This "dialogue" (as the user rightly observed) is the "apostles' doctrine." Why is this "love"? "Let all things be done unto *edifying*" (1 Corinthians 14:26). "Edifying" means "to build up." "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that *all may learn*, and *all may be comforted*" (1 Corinthians 14:31). In the institutional "sermon," *one man* "comforts." In the house church, *all* the brethren, as led by the Spirit, "comfort" one another. This is the body "edifying itself *in love*" (Ephesians 4:16). This is "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

### **The Financial Proof of Love: The Deacon's Fund**

This "love in deed" is proven, finally and absolutely, by what the house church does with its money. This is the *ultimate test* of 1 John 3:17-18.

The house church has no "overhead." It has no "Rabbi" to pay (its elders are "bivocational" and "not greedy of filthy lucre" - 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). It has no "mortgage" to pay (its "temple" is the *home* - Romans 16:5).

Therefore, 100% of the church's "collection" can be used for its *one, true, biblical purpose*: "love one to another."

1. **The Command for the Collection:** "Now concerning the collection *for the saints...*" (1 Corinthians 16:1). The collection was *not* for a "general budget"; it was "for the saints" (the poor brethren). "They determined to send *relief* unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:" (Acts 11:29).
2. **The First Church's Example:** "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and *distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*" (Acts 4:34-35). This is the "love in deed" that "shall... know" we are His disciples. It is radical, sacrificial charity for the "brother" who "hath need."
3. **The Creation of the Deacon's Office:** This "distribution" of "love" (charity) was the *only reason* the office of "Deacon" was created. In Acts 6, the "Grecian" widows were "neglected in the *daily ministration*" (Acts 6:1). This "ministration" was the distribution of food and money. The apostles were being pulled from the Word to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2). Therefore, they appointed seven men (deacons) "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this *business*" (Acts 6:3). What "business"? The "business" of "love in deed." The *sole job* of the Deacon is to manage the church's "love fund" and distribute it to the poor, so the elders can focus on the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4).

### **Conclusion: The One True Mark, The One True Model**

The "harlot" institution, with its 30,000 "daughters," is a "sounding brass." It "loves in word, neither in tongue." It is a passive, anonymous, "clique" system that "makes merchandise" of the flock to fund its "filthy lucre" salaries and "vain" buildings. It *fails* the test of John 13:35.

The "bride" of Christ, the true house church, is the *only* model that "loves in deed and in truth."

- It is an *intimate, participatory family* (not an anonymous "clique").
- It shares *full "Love Feasts"* (not "superficial small talk").
- It *dialogues* the Word (it is not "passive").
- It gives *100% of its collections* to the *Deacons* to distribute to the *poor*.

This is the fulfillment of Christ's command. The house church model—where believers are an intimate, participatory family, who share full meals together, and give all their money to the poor—is the *only* model on earth that practices this tangible, costly love.

"By this shall all men know" that we are His disciples.

# Part V: A Topical Index for the Berean Student.

## A Simple Guide to Topical Bible Study

The goal of this method is to empower you to understand the Bible for yourself, free from the influence of denominational doctrines, church traditions, or academic opinions. By letting the Bible interpret itself, you can arrive at a pure and consistent understanding of God's Word on any given topic. The process is simple and requires only a King James Bible and a willingness to diligently seek the truth.

### Step 1: Gather All Scripture

The first step is to collect every verse in the King James Bible that pertains to your chosen topic. To do this effectively, you must begin with a clean mind, setting aside any preconceived ideas or church teachings you may have learned.

- **Choose a Topic:** Select the subject you wish to study (e.g., Faith, Repentance, Salvation).
- **Use Verse-Finding Tools:** Use public domain resources like *Nave's Topical Bible* or *Torrey's New Topical Textbook* for the sole purpose of locating verses. Do not read any accompanying commentary. Your goal is simply to compile a complete list of relevant scriptures.
- **Create Your List:** Write down every verse you find, from Genesis to Revelation. This exhaustive list is the raw material for your study.

### Step 2: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

Once you have gathered all the verses, the next step is to harmonize them to find the consistent truth they collectively teach. The Bible is its own best interpreter.

- **Start with the Simple Verses:** Read through your list and identify the verses that are the most straightforward and easy to understand. These clear passages will form the foundation of your doctrine on the topic.
- **Harmonize with Complex Verses:** Use the foundational understanding you gained from the simple verses to shed light on the more difficult or seemingly ambiguous passages. A true biblical doctrine will not have any contradictions. Every complex verse must ultimately align with the clear and simple ones.
- **Seek Complete Harmony:** Continue this process until your understanding of the topic allows every single verse on your list to fit together in perfect harmony, without exception or contradiction.

## Step 3: Form Your Conclusion from Scripture Alone

The final step is to form your belief based entirely on the harmonized conclusion you reached in Step 2. This conclusion is not yours, nor is it from any pastor or theologian; it is the Bible's own teaching on the matter.

- **Believe the Harmonized Truth:** Accept the clear, consistent doctrine revealed by the entirety of Scripture on your topic.
- **Reject All External Authority:** Your conclusion must be based solely on the King James Bible. If it aligns with what a church teaches, let it be because the church is aligned with the Bible, not the other way around. Disregard any teaching, commentary, or tradition that contradicts the harmonized truth you have found.

By following this three-step method, you can build your faith on the solid rock of Scripture and be protected from the shifting winds of human doctrine.

### Recommended Core Beliefs for Study

To begin your studies, you are encouraged to conduct a topical Bible study on each of the following 28 foundational doctrines.

#### 1. Defining the Gospel

The Gospel is the message that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, as recorded by eyewitnesses in the Gospels. Salvation is received by faith in this historical event, not by adherence to the Mosaic Law.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-47, John 20:31, Acts 2:22-24, Acts 2:32, Acts 2:36-39, Acts 10:36-43, Acts 13:26-39, Romans 1:1-4, Romans 1:16, Romans 4:24-25, Romans 10:14-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, Galatians 1:6-9, 2 Timothy 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:15.

#### 2. Defining the Essentials for Salvation

Salvation requires faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, baptism by water and the Spirit, and a changed life that bears fruit. It is a gift of God's grace, with baptism being a necessary step for receiving the Holy Spirit.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Matthew 3:8, Matthew 7:16-21, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, Luke 8:15, Luke 13:3-5, John 3:5-6, John 3:16, John 3:36, John 5:24, John 15:1-8, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, Acts 17:30, Acts 22:16, Romans 2:6-7, Romans 6:3-4, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Ephesians 5:9, Philippians 1:11, Colossians 1:10, Titus 3:5-7, Hebrews 5:9, James 2:14-26, 2 Peter 3:9.



### 3. Defining Faith

Faith is a multifaceted concept, being simultaneously a gift from God, a divine command, and the evidence of a transformed life. Defined as the assurance of things hoped for, its object is God, Christ, and His promises revealed in Scripture. Faith is initiated by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of God's Word and is the necessary means by which believers receive forgiveness, justification, salvation, and sanctification.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Numbers 13:30, 2 Chronicles 20:20, Job 19:25, Psalm 27:13, Psalm 116:10, Daniel 3:17, Daniel 6:10-23, Matthew 11:22, Matthew 16:16, Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21-22, Mark 1:15, Mark 9:23, Mark 16:16, Luke 7:50, Luke 17:5-6, Luke 24:47, John 1:12, John 1:49, John 3:15, John 4:39, John 5:46, John 6:29, John 6:40-47, John 10:25-27, John 11:27, John 12:36-37, John 12:46, John 14:1, John 16:30, John 17:20, John 20:28-31, Acts 6:5-7, Acts 8:12-13, Acts 8:21, Acts 8:37, Acts 10:43, Acts 11:21-24, Acts 13:12-39, Acts 14:22, Acts 15:9, Acts 16:31-34, Acts 19:9, Acts 20:21, Acts 24:14, Acts 26:18-27, Romans 1:8-17, Romans 3:21-22, Romans 3:25-28, Romans 4:12-24, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 10:3-4, Romans 10:14-17, Romans 11:20, Romans 12:3, Romans 14:22-23, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:5, 1 Corinthians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 1:24, 2 Corinthians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 8:7, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:16-20, Galatians 3:11-14, Galatians 3:22-26, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 3:12-17, Ephesians 6:16-23, Philippians 1:29, Colossians 1:4-23, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 2 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Timothy 1:4-5, 1 Timothy 1:18-19, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 1:5-12, 2 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 4:2-3, Hebrews 6:12, Hebrews 10:22, Hebrews 11:1-13, Hebrews 11:17-39, Hebrews 12:2, James 1:3-6, James 2:17-26, 1 Peter 1:5-8, 1 Peter 2:6-7, 1 Peter 5:9, 2 Peter 1:1, 1 John 3:23, 1 John 5:1-5, Jude 1:20, Philemon 1:5.

### 4. Defining Repentance

Repentance is a fundamental and transformative change of mind and heart, involving a conscious decision to turn away from sin and toward God. It is an internal transformation enabled by the Holy Spirit received at baptism, not an act of penance to atone for sin. Repentance is a necessary command from God, a gift from Christ, and is essential for the pardon of sin and for salvation.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 6:3, Leviticus 26:40, Judges 10:15-16, 1 Samuel 15:24-30, 2 Samuel 12:13, 1 Kings 8:33-47, 1 Kings 21:27-29, 2 Chronicles 6:26, 2 Chronicles 7:14, 2 Chronicles 33:12-13, Ezra 9:6-15, Job 42:6, Psalm 95:7-8, Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 1:16-17, Isaiah 45:22, Jeremiah 8:6, Jeremiah 31:19, Ezekiel 14:6, Ezekiel 16:61-63, Ezekiel 18:30-32, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 11:20-24, Matthew 12:41, Matthew 21:29-32, Matthew 27:3-5, Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12, Luke 13:3-5, Luke 15:7-10, Luke 15:17-21, Luke 16:30-31, Luke 18:13, Luke 19:8, Luke 23:40-41, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 3:19, Acts 5:31, Acts 8:22, Acts 11:18, Acts 14:15, Acts 17:30, Acts 19:18, Acts 20:21, Acts 26:20, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 7:9-11, Colossians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:25, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:9-10, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 2:5-21, Revelation 3:3-19, Revelation 9:20, Revelation 16:9.

## 5. Defining "Being Born of Water and the Spirit"

Being "born of water and the Spirit," as stated in John 3:5, is a literal and non-negotiable requirement for entering God's Kingdom. It is a single, unified event where "water" refers to physical water baptism and "Spirit" refers to the reception of the Holy Spirit. This event, which occurs at the time of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, is an act of obedient faith and is inseparable from justification and sanctification.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Deuteronomy 30:6, Nehemiah 9:20, Psalm 68:18, Isaiah 32:15, Isaiah 43:6-7, Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 11:19, Ezekiel 36:26, Ezekiel 39:29, Haggai 2:5, John 1:13, John 3:3-8, John 3:34, John 6:27, John 7:38-39, John 14:16, John 20:22, Acts 2:38-39, Acts 5:32, Acts 10:44, Acts 11:17, Acts 15:8, Romans 2:29, Romans 6:4-6, Romans 7:6-22, Romans 8:7-8, Romans 8:16-17, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 5:5-17, Galatians 3:14, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 1:16-17, Ephesians 2:1-10, Ephesians 4:24-30, Colossians 2:11, Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5-6, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:3-23, 1 Peter 2:2, 1 Peter 3:20-21, 1 Peter 4:14, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:29, 1 John 3:2-9, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:7-13, 1 John 5:1-18, Revelation 7:3, Revelation 9:4.

## 6. Defining Baptism

Baptism is a direct commandment from Christ, essential for salvation, and serves as an act of obedient faith. It requires prior repentance and belief in the Gospel. The proper mode is immersion in "much water" for the remission of sins and the reception of the Holy Ghost. It symbolizes the believer's union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, uniting them to His body, the church, and replacing circumcision as the seal of the New Covenant.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 3:21, Job 29:14, Isaiah 61:10, Matthew 3:5-15, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 22:11-14, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, Luke 3:21, John 1:33, John 3:3-6, John 3:22-23, John 4:1-2, John 14:23-24, Acts 1:5, Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:12-39, Acts 9:18, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 11:16-18, Acts 13:24, Acts 16:15-34, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:3-5, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-4, Romans 7:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, 1 Corinthians 10:2, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-28, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:5-30, Ephesians 5:26, Colossians 2:11-13, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Titus 3:5-7, 1 Peter 3:20-21, 1 Peter 4:17.

## 7. Defining Forgiveness of Sins

The forgiveness of sins is achieved solely through faith in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross; it cannot be earned. A central aspect of this forgiveness is that God "will not impute sin" to believers, meaning He does not hold or record their sins against them. For believers, past sins are forgiven, and future sins are not recorded, providing comprehensive coverage under Christ's atonement. This act is rooted in God's nature as love, which keeps no record of wrongs.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Exodus 34:6-7, Leviticus 16:30, Nehemiah 9:17, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1-13, Psalm 65:3, Psalm 86:5-16, Psalm 103:2-12, Psalm 130:3, Isaiah

1:18, Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 53:10-12, Isaiah 54:9-10, Isaiah 55:1-11, Jeremiah 31:34, Jeremiah 33:8, Jeremiah 50:20, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Zechariah 13:1, Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:77, Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 4:4-8, Romans 5:11-20, Romans 11:26-27, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 1:6-8, Ephesians 2:4-9, Colossians 1:14, Colossians 2:13-14, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 9:12-14, Hebrews 10:17, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 1:7-9, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 4:7-8, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 7:14, Philemon 1:18-19.

## 8. Defining Justification

Justification is a legal declaration by God in which He pronounces a sinner righteous. This declaration is not based on the individual's merit or works but is granted solely through faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is a free gift of God's grace, grounded in Christ's atoning blood and resurrection, and is received by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the Law.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 15:6, Exodus 23:7, Leviticus 18:5, Job 9:2-3, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1-2, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 143:2, Isaiah 45:25, Isaiah 50:8, Isaiah 53:11, Isaiah 54:17, Isaiah 61:10, Jeremiah 23:6, Habakkuk 2:4, Zechariah 3:4-5, Luke 18:14, John 5:24, Acts 13:39, Acts 15:1-29, Romans 1:17, Romans 2:13, Romans 3:20-31, Romans 4:2-16, Romans 4:25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 8:3-34, Romans 9:31-32, Romans 10:5, Romans 11:6, 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 9:21, 1 Corinthians 15:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:14-21, Galatians 3:11, Galatians 5:4, Philippians 3:8-9, Titus 3:7, James 2:10.

## 9. Defining Sanctification

Sanctification is a completed, one-time event that occurs at the moment of salvation through faith in Christ's singular, all-sufficient sacrifice. It is not a lifelong process of works or moral improvement. Scripture affirms in the present tense that believers "are sanctified" and have been "perfected for ever," granting them a permanent state of holiness and immediate access to God. This finished work of Christ is distinct from the ongoing process of "bearing fruit."

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Exodus 13:2, Exodus 19:10-14, Exodus 29:37, Exodus 31:13, Exodus 40:9-11, Leviticus 8:10-12, Leviticus 20:7-8, Leviticus 21:8, Leviticus 27:14-16, Numbers 7:1, Deuteronomy 5:12, Joshua 7:13, 1 Samuel 16:5, 1 Chronicles 15:12-14, 2 Chronicles 5:11, 2 Chronicles 7:16, 2 Chronicles 29:5-34, 2 Chronicles 30:8-17, 2 Chronicles 31:6, Nehemiah 13:22, Isaiah 5:16, Isaiah 13:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Ezekiel 20:12, Ezekiel 36:23, Ezekiel 37:28, Joel 1:14, John 10:36, John 17:17-19, Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 7:14, Ephesians 5:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 4:5, 2 Timothy 2:21, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 9:13, Hebrews 10:10-14, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 1:1, Revelation 22:11.

## 10. Defining Imputed Righteousness and Infused Righteousness

Imputed righteousness is the core of justification, where the perfect, external righteousness of Christ is legally credited to a believer's account solely through faith. This is a one-time forensic declaration by God. In contrast, infused righteousness is the flawed concept of a lifelong process where grace is imparted into a believer, who then cooperates through works and sacraments to become internally righteous over time. The former provides full assurance based on Christ's finished work, while the latter undermines grace and leads to uncertainty.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 15:6, Leviticus 7:18, Leviticus 17:4, Numbers 18:27, Psalm 32:2, Psalm 106:31, Isaiah 64:6, Romans 2:26, Romans 4:3-24, Romans 5:13-19, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Galatians 3:6, Philippians 3:9, James 2:23.

## 11. Defining "Bearing Fruit"

Bearing fruit is the essential, ongoing, and visible evidence of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. It manifests as a transformed life, demonstrated through actions aligned with the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, and peace. This process is distinct from sanctification; it is the natural result of the permanent holiness a believer has already received by faith, not a means of earning it. The degree of fruit varies among believers, but its presence is a key indicator of true salvation.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Psalm 1:3, Psalm 92:14, Proverbs 11:30, Proverbs 12:14, Song of Solomon 2:3, Isaiah 27:6, Matthew 3:8-10, Matthew 7:16-20, Matthew 12:33, Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:20, Luke 3:8, Luke 6:43-44, Luke 8:15, Luke 13:9, John 4:36, John 12:24, John 15:1-16, Romans 1:13, Romans 6:21-22, Romans 7:4-5, 2 Corinthians 9:10, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:9, Philippians 1:11, Philippians 4:17, Colossians 1:6-10, Hebrews 12:11, Hebrews 13:15, James 3:17-18.

## 12. Defining the "Commandments" of Christ and the Apostles

The commandments for a Christian are the teachings of Christ and the Apostles as recorded in the New Testament. These are not suggestions but are the authoritative commands of the Lord that provide all necessary moral guidance. This new covenant of grace, centered on Christ's imputed righteousness, replaces the Old Covenant's Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments. While Christians strive to obey Christ's commands, they are justified by grace through faith, not by adherence to the old law.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 26:5, Exodus 15:26, Exodus 16:28, Leviticus 22:31, Leviticus 26:3, Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 5:10-29, Deuteronomy 6:1-25, Deuteronomy 7:9-11, Deuteronomy 8:1-6, Deuteronomy 10:13, Deuteronomy 11:1-27, Deuteronomy 13:4, Deuteronomy 15:5, Deuteronomy 26:17-18, Deuteronomy 27:1, Deuteronomy 28:1-9, Deuteronomy 30:8-16, Joshua 1:7, Joshua 22:5, 1 Kings 2:3, 1 Kings 3:14, 1 Kings 6:12, 1 Kings 8:61, 1 Kings 9:6, 1 Kings 11:38, Nehemiah 1:9, Nehemiah 9:13-14, Psalm 78:7, Psalm 89:31, Psalm 119:10-166, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Matthew 5:19, Matthew 19:17, Matthew 22:36-40, Matthew 28:20, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 1:6, John 12:50, John 13:34, John 14:15-31, John 15:10-14,



Romans 16:26, 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 Corinthians 14:37, 1 Timothy 6:14, Titus 1:3, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 3:22-24, 1 John 4:21, 1 John 5:2-3, 2 John 1:6, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12, Revelation 22:14.

### 13. Defining House Churches

House churches are the only model for church gatherings found in the New Testament. They are small, intimate communities that meet in homes, characterized by shared participation, a central focus on reading and discussing the Bible, and practicing hospitality through shared meals ("love feasts"). Leadership is shared, not centered on a single pastor, and financial collections are for the needy, not for buildings or salaries. This model contrasts with the hierarchical and commercialized nature of many modern denominational structures.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Acts 2:46-47, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:3, Acts 12:12, Acts 16:40, Acts 20:20, Acts 28:30-31, Romans 16:5-15, 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, 1 Corinthians 3:3-6, 1 Corinthians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, 1 Timothy 3:5-15, Titus 1:5-9, Philemon 1:2.

### 14. Defining the Communion, or the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast to remember the finished, one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It should be practiced as a "love feast"—a full, shared meal—within a house church, fostering fellowship and unity. This contrasts with the ritualistic token of a small wafer and sip of juice common in institutional churches. It is a remembrance and does not impart grace or forgive sin. The doctrine of Transubstantiation is rejected as it contradicts the nature of the supper as a memorial of a once-for-all sacrifice.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, Luke 24:30, John 6:47-58, Acts 2:42-46, Acts 20:7-11, Acts 27:35, 1 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Corinthians 10:16-21, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34.

### 15. Defining Financial Offerings

In the biblical house church model, financial offerings are free-will collections intended exclusively for the support of the poor, widows, orphans, and others in desperate need within the community. These funds are for charitable "good works," not for church buildings, mortgages, or salaries for local elders or pastors, who are expected to work and support their own families. The Old Testament tithe is not a binding requirement for New Testament Christians.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Ezra 2:69, Nehemiah 7:70, Malachi 3:10, Mark 12:41, Luke 21:1, John 8:20, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 11:29, Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-24, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, Galatians 2:10, Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 5:16, Hebrews 13:16, 3 John 1:5-8.

## 16. Instructions How to Study the Bible Topically

Topical Bible study is a simple and accessible method of direct engagement with Scripture, free from the interpretation of pastors or academic institutions. It involves choosing a topic, gathering all relevant verses from the King James Bible using tools like Nave's Topical Bible, identifying key phrases, and comparing verses to let Scripture interpret Scripture. This independent approach empowers individuals to find answers for themselves, avoid doctrinal error, and take responsibility for their own spiritual understanding.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Deuteronomy 17:19, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 119:11-97, Proverbs 2:1-5, Matthew 13:52, Matthew 23:8-10, Luke 24:27-45, John 5:39, Acts 17:11, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Peter 1:19-20, Revelation 1:3.

## 17. Defining False Prophets

False prophets are teachers who claim to speak for God but are not sent by Him. They teach false doctrines that contradict Scripture, often motivated by personal gain. Characteristically, they are eloquent and persuasive, twisting Scripture to offer a false sense of peace and security, thereby encouraging people to continue in sin. True discernment comes not from trusting credentials or popularity, but from testing every teaching against the Bible and examining the teacher's life for fruits of genuine repentance and obedience.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Deuteronomy 18:20-22, Isaiah 8:20, Jeremiah 5:31, Jeremiah 14:14, Jeremiah 23:16-32, Jeremiah 28:15, Jeremiah 29:8-9, Ezekiel 13:2-10, Ezekiel 22:28, Micah 3:5-11, Zechariah 13:3, Matthew 7:15-20, Matthew 24:11-24, Mark 13:22, Luke 6:26, Acts 20:29-30, Romans 16:18, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Galatians 1:8, Colossians 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:4.

## 18. Defining Heresy and Heretics

Heresy is any doctrine that deviates from the foundational truths established by Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament before 70 AD. Heretics are those who promote such beliefs. There are no "secondary doctrines"; any teaching that contradicts Scripture is a dangerous "doctrine of devils." Truth must be determined by the Bible alone, rejecting the traditions of men, Church Fathers, or councils as authoritative.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Jeremiah 17:5, Matthew 15:9, Acts 20:30, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 11:19, Galatians 1:8-9, Galatians 5:20, Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:22, 1 Timothy 1:3, 1 Timothy 4:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16-18, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Titus 1:14, Titus 3:9-11, Hebrews 13:9, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 2:18-19, 2 John 1:9-10, Jude 1:4.

## 19. How to Deal With Heresy and Heretics

Believers must deal with heresy by first identifying it through rigorous testing against Scripture. Once a teaching is confirmed as false, the Bible commands believers to mark and avoid those who cause divisions contrary to sound doctrine. This involves not listening to them, not receiving them into one's home or church, and not offering them support. The goal is to earnestly contend for the faith and refute their errors, while avoiding endless, unprofitable debates.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Deuteronomy 13:3, Isaiah 8:20, Jeremiah 23:16, Jeremiah 27:9-16, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 18:17, Romans 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16, 2 Timothy 3:5-8, Titus 1:10-14, Titus 3:9-11, 1 John 4:1, 2 John 1:10-11, Jude 1:3.

## 20. Defining Death

Death is a state of unconscious "sleep" in the grave, not an immediate transition to heaven or hell. The dead are unaware of the passage of time and have no knowledge, thoughts, or feelings. The concept of an inherently "immortal soul" that lives on after death is rejected as a lie originated by the devil. Humans are mortal; only God is immortal. The "spirit" that returns to God at death is the "breath of life," not a conscious entity. The dead, including righteous figures like King David, remain in their graves awaiting the resurrection. The hope for the believer is the future resurrection, when they will receive an immortal, "angel-like" body.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3:4, Genesis 25:8, Exodus 7:11, Leviticus 20:27, 1 Samuel 28:3-25, 1 Kings 2:10, 1 Kings 11:21-43, 1 Kings 14:20-31, 1 Kings 15:8-24, 1 Kings 16:6-28, 1 Kings 22:40-50, 2 Kings 8:24, 2 Kings 10:35, 2 Kings 13:9-13, 2 Kings 14:16-29, 2 Kings 15:7-38, 2 Kings 16:20, 2 Kings 20:1-21, 2 Kings 21:18, 2 Kings 24:6, Job 4:17, Job 14:1-21, Job 17:13, Job 27:3, Psalm 104:29, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 146:4, Ecclesiastes 9:5-10, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Isaiah 8:20, Ezekiel 18:20, Daniel 2:2, Matthew 9:24-25, Matthew 13:43, Matthew 22:30, Matthew 24:23-24, Mark 5:39-42, Mark 12:25, Luke 8:49-56, Luke 20:35-36, John 5:28-29, John 11:11-44, John 20:17, Acts 2:29-34, Acts 5:2-29, Acts 16:16-18, Acts 17:11, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:50-55, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, 2 Corinthians 11:14, Philippians 1:21-24, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Hebrews 9:27, James 2:26, 2 Peter 3:10, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 13:13-14, Revelation 16:3-14, Revelation 21:4, Revelation 22:12.

## 21. Defining the Second Coming

The Second Coming of Christ will not be a secret event but a visible, global phenomenon that "every eye shall see." Its timing is unknown and will be sudden, like a thief in the night. At His return, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the living righteous, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Simultaneously, the wicked will be slain by the "brightness of his coming." The earth will then be left desolate and uninhabited during the thousand-year Millennium, as the saints will be with Christ in heaven.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Job 19:25-26, Psalm 50:3-4, Song of Solomon 2:8-10, Isaiah 11:3-4, Isaiah 24:23, Isaiah 34:2-4, Jeremiah 13:12-15, Jeremiah 25:30-33, Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 7:27, Matthew 13:20, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 24:3-51, Matthew 25:1-46, Matthew 26:64, Mark 4:16, Mark 8:38, Mark 13:32-37, Luke 8:13, Luke 12:36-40, Luke 17:22-37, Luke 19:12-15, Luke 21:36, John 11:23-25, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, Acts 3:19-21, Romans 6:9-10, Romans 8:21, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:20-21, Philippians 4:5, Colossians 3:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 2:12, 2 Timothy 4:8, 2 Timothy 4:18, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 9:28, James 5:7-8, 1 Peter 1:5-13, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Peter 3:3-4, 2 Peter 3:10-12, 1 John 2:28, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 4:17, Jude 1:14, Jude 1:24, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 6:12-17, Revelation 11:15, Revelation 16:12-21, Revelation 18:1-5, Revelation 19:15-21, Revelation 20:5-6, Revelation 22:5, Revelation 22:20.

## 22. Defining Daniel's 70th Week

The prophecy of Daniel's 70th week was completely fulfilled historically and is not a future seven-year tribulation. This final "week" corresponds to the seven-year Jewish-Roman War from 66 AD to 73 AD. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the permanent cessation of sacrifices in 70 AD occurred "in the midst of the week." The war's conclusion in 73 AD marked the end of the Old Covenant system and the beginning of the Church Age.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Deuteronomy 28:52-57, Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:1-34, Mark 13:1-30, Luke 19:43-44, Luke 21:20-32, John 4:21-24.

## 23. Defining the Millennium or 1000 Years

The Millennium is a literal 1,000-year period that begins at the Second Coming of Christ. During this time, the resurrected and translated saints reign with Christ in heaven. Meanwhile, the earth remains desolate and empty of human life, serving as the "bottomless pit" where Satan is bound. The wicked remain dead in their graves until the second resurrection for judgment at the end of the 1,000 years.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Isaiah 11:4-9, Isaiah 13:9, Isaiah 24:1-22, Jeremiah 4:23-28, Jeremiah 25:33, John 5:28-29, John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 6:12-14, Revelation 16:18-21, Revelation 20:1-10, Revelation 21:2-3, Revelation 22:11-12.

## 24. Defining the Book of Life, Election, and Predestination

Every person's name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world, as God desires all to be saved. However, salvation is conditional, and a name can be blotted out through unrepentant sin and unbelief. Predestination refers to God's plan for believers to be adopted and conformed to Christ's image, not a pre-selection of certain individuals for salvation.



and others for damnation. Election is based on God's foreknowledge of who would respond in faith.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Psalm 139:16, Isaiah 4:3, Ezekiel 9:4, Daniel 12:1, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 22:14, Luke 10:20, John 1:12, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:29-33, Romans 9:11-24, Romans 11:5-7, Ephesians 1:4-11, Philippians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:19, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19.

## 25. Defining Sins that Lead to Being Outside of the City of God

The New Testament provides specific lists of sins that, if practiced without repentance, will result in exclusion from the City of God on Judgment Day. These include idolatry, sexual immorality (fornication, adultery, homosexuality), theft, greed, drunkenness, witchcraft, hatred, strife, heresy, envy, murder, lying, and cowardice. While every sin is forgivable through repentance and faith in the Gospel, those who die in unrepentant sin will not inherit God's Kingdom.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Romans 1:28-32, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 2:2-3, Ephesians 5:3-6, Colossians 3:5-9, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:2-5, Titus 3:3, 1 Peter 4:3, Revelation 9:21, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 22:15.

## 26. Defining How Books in Heaven Are Used on Judgment Day

On Judgment Day, heavenly books serve as records for judgment. The Book of Life contains the names of all people, written from the foundation of the world, though names can be blotted out due to unrepentant sin. The Book of Evil Deeds records the sins of the unrepentant, but these are completely washed away for a believer at the moment of faith, repentance, and baptism. The Book of Good Deeds records the works of believers, which are for rewards, not salvation.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Exodus 32:32-33, Nehemiah 13:14, Psalm 56:8, Psalm 69:28, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Daniel 7:10, Daniel 12:1, Ezekiel 3:20-21, Ezekiel 14:14-20, Ezekiel 18:20-26, Ezekiel 33:10-20, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 12:36, Luke 10:20, Romans 2:16, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Philippians 4:3, Hebrews 4:13, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27.

## 27. Defining Hell and the Lake of Fire

The biblical term "hell" (Sheol) refers to the grave—the state of unconscious death. The concept of an eternally burning place of conscious torment is a pagan idea. The Lake of Fire is a future, finite event, also called the "second death," where the wicked are utterly destroyed and cease to exist, a view known as annihilationism. Phrases like "everlasting punishment" refer to the permanent result of destruction, not an unending process of torment.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 1:5-31, Numbers 11:2, Deuteronomy 32:22, 1 Samuel 1:22, 2 Samuel 19:4, 2 Kings 22:17, 2 Chronicles 34:25, Job 21:30, Psalm 9:17, Proverbs

16:4, Isaiah 34:10, Isaiah 43:17, Isaiah 47:12-15, Isaiah 66:24, Jeremiah 7:20, Jeremiah 17:27, Ezekiel 20:47-48, Zephaniah 1:14, Malachi 4:1-3, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 25:46, Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 9:42-48, Mark 14:3-13, Luke 7:36-50, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 12:46-48, Luke 16:23-31, John 5:29, John 11:1-44, John 12:1-11, Romans 2:5, Romans 9:22, 1 Peter 2:8, 2 Peter 2:4-9, 2 Peter 3:7-11, Jude 1:6-7, Revelation 6:17, Revelation 14:10-11, Revelation 16:14, Revelation 20:5-15..

## 28. Defining Eternal Life and the New Earth

At the end of the millennium, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal home for the redeemed. Eternal life is a gift from God, and to know Him and Jesus Christ is to possess it. In this restored creation, the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven, and God will dwell directly with humanity. There will be no more death, sorrow, or pain. Believers will have immortal, glorified bodies like the angels, and they will be like Christ, reigning with Him forever.

**Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses:** Genesis 2:9, Genesis 3:22-24, Genesis 7:9-15, Genesis 17:7-8, Exodus 17:5-6, Numbers 20:7-13, Deuteronomy 32:6, 1 Chronicles 29:10, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 21:4, Psalm 36:9, Psalm 37:11-29, Psalm 45:13, Psalm 48:1-3, Psalm 87:3, Psalm 104:4, Psalm 132:9-16, Psalm 133:3, Proverbs 4:9, Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 12:3, Isaiah 25:8, Isaiah 30:19, Isaiah 35:10, Isaiah 52:1, Isaiah 55:1-3, Isaiah 56:5, Isaiah 60:20, Isaiah 61:3-10, Isaiah 65:17-25, Isaiah 66:22-24, Jeremiah 2:13, Jeremiah 3:19, Jeremiah 31:13-33, Jeremiah 32:38, Ezekiel 16:9-13, Ezekiel 34:15-25, Ezekiel 36:28, Hosea 1:10, Hosea 2:18, Hosea 13:14, Hosea 14:4, Joel 3:18, Daniel 2:35, Daniel 7:18-27, Daniel 10:5-6, Daniel 12:2-3, Zechariah 8:8, Zechariah 13:9, Matthew 5:3-12, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 11:5, Matthew 17:1-7, Matthew 19:29, Matthew 21:22, Matthew 22:1-14, Matthew 22:30-32, Matthew 24:37-47, Matthew 25:34-46, Mark 9:3, Mark 10:17, Mark 11:23-24, Mark 12:25, Mark 14:36, Mark 16:5, Luke 3:5, Luke 11:2-9, Luke 12:6-7, Luke 12:32, Luke 15:20-24, Luke 19:17, Luke 20:35-36, Luke 22:29-42, John 3:15, John 4:10-14, John 5:24-39, John 6:27-68, John 7:37-38, John 10:28-29, John 11:22, John 12:25, John 14:1-3, John 14:13-14, John 15:7-16, John 16:19-26, John 17:2-3, John 20:17, John 21:25, Acts 1:10, Acts 10:9-16, Acts 13:46-48, Romans 2:7, Romans 3:10-24, Romans 5:17-21, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:15-32, Romans 13:14, 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, 1 Corinthians 3:5-21, 1 Corinthians 9:25, 1 Corinthians 10:4, 1 Corinthians 15:26-58, 2 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, 2 Corinthians 6:18, Galatians 3:7-29, Galatians 4:5-26, Galatians 6:8, Ephesians 1:5-14, Ephesians 3:6-20, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philippians 3:21, 1 Timothy 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:12-19, 2 Timothy 1:1-10, 2 Timothy 2:5-12, 2 Timothy 4:8, Titus 1:2, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 1:14, Hebrews 2:14-15, Hebrews 6:12-17, Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 11:8-16, Hebrews 12:22-23, Hebrews 13:14, James 1:5-12, James 2:5, James 5:16, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Peter 3:13, 1 John 1:2, 1 John 2:25, 1 John 3:2-22, 1 John 5:4-20, Jude 1:21, Revelation 1:6, Revelation 2:7-10, Revelation 3:4-18, Revelation 4:4, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 6:11, Revelation 7:9-17, Revelation 10:1, Revelation 18:1, Revelation 19:8, Revelation 20:14, Revelation 21:1-7, Revelation 21:10-25, Revelation 22:1-17

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

**Article One: The Gospel** Genesis 3:15, Psalm 2:1-12, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, Luke 19:10, Luke 24:45-49, John 1:1-18, John 3:16, Romans 1:1-6, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:34, 2 Corinthians

5:17-21, Galatians 4:4-7, Colossians 1:21-23, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:14-16, 2 Peter 3:9

**Article Two: The Sinfulness of Man** Genesis 3:15-24, Genesis 6:5, Deuteronomy 1:39, Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah 7:15-16, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 17:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Ezekiel 18:19-20, Matthew 7:21-23, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 3:9-18, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Romans 7:9, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 9:27-28, Revelation 20:11-15

**Article Three: The Atonement of Christ** Psalm 22:1-31, Isaiah 53:1-12, John 12:32, John 14:6, Acts 10:39-43, Acts 16:30-32, Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:10-14, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:13-20, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 9:12-15, Hebrews 9:24-28, Hebrews 10:1-18, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 2:2

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**Article Five: The Regeneration of the Sinner** Luke 15:24, John 3:3, John 7:37-39, John 10:10, John 16:7-14, Acts 2:37-39, Romans 6:4-11, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:15, Colossians 2:13, 1 Peter 3:18

**Article Six: The Election to Salvation** Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:6, Jeremiah 31:31-33, Matthew 24:31, Matthew 25:34, John 6:70, John 15:16, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:6-8, Romans 11:7, 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 3:1-11, Ephesians 4:4-13, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 1 Peter 1:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 7:9-10

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**Article Nine: The Security of the Believer** Matthew 7:23, John 10:28-29, John 14:1-4, John 16:12-14, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 8:35-39, Romans 12:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Ephesians 1:13-14, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:12, Colossians 1:21-22, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 13:5, James 1:12, 1 John 2:19, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 5:13-15, Jude 1:24-25

**Article Ten: The Great Commission** Psalm 51:13, Proverbs 11:30, Isaiah 52:7, Matthew 28:19-20, John 14:6, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:12, Acts 10:42-43, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians

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## **Justification: Calvinism, Confessional Lutheranism, & Arminianism**

### **Comparative Views on Justification**

Matthew 7:13-14, John 3:16, John 10:14-15, John 10:28, Acts 2:21, Acts 17:30, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 2:6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2

## **TULIP: Weighed and Found Wanting**

### **Calvinism: Is Based on Cherry Picking or Incomplete Evidence**

Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Malachi 3:6, Matthew 1:21, John 6:37, John 6:39, John 6:44-45, John 6:65, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 10:27-29, John 16:33, John 17:9, Acts 13:48, Acts 16:14, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 3:24, Romans 5:12, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 8:32-39, Romans 9:10-29, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:10-23, Ephesians 2:1-3, Ephesians 5:25, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19

### **T - Total Depravity**

Genesis 6:5, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-12, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3

### **U - Unconditional Election**

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, John 6:37, John 6:44, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:11-16, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 1:9

### **L - Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)**

Matthew 1:21, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 17:9, Acts 20:28, Romans 8:32-34, Ephesians 5:25

### **I - Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling)**

John 6:37, John 6:45, Romans 8:30, Romans 9:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, Philippians 2:13, 2 Timothy 2:25



## **P - Perseverance of the Saints**

John 6:39, John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19

### **The Book of Life—The Strong Foundation**

Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, Isaiah 4:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Daniel 12:1-3, Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 10:30, Luke 10:20, Luke 22:32, John 5:24, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-6, Philippians 4:3, 2 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:2, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:7-8, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

### **The Election of God**

Genesis 21:12, Deuteronomy 7:6, Nehemiah 9:7, Psalm 33:12, Psalm 65:4, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 45:5, Isaiah 65:9, Haggai 2:23, Matthew 20:16, Mark 13:20, Luke 6:13, Luke 10:20, Luke 18:7, John 6:44, John 13:18, John 15:16, John 15:19, John 17:6, Acts 9:15, Acts 13:48, Acts 22:14, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-16, Romans 9:23, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 16:13, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Galatians 1:15, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 5:21, 2 Timothy 2:4, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:6, 1 Peter 5:13, 2 Peter 1:10, 2 John 1:13

### **Israel, the Jews: The Elect, "The Chosen" People**

Genesis 12:2, Genesis 14:13, Genesis 17:10-11, Genesis 22:17, Genesis 35:22, Genesis 40:15, Genesis 49:28, Genesis 50:25, Exodus 2:11-12, Exodus 5:17, Exodus 9:7, Exodus 12:40-42, Exodus 19:4-6, Exodus 28:1, Exodus 32:9, Exodus 33:16, Leviticus 18:4, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 10:36, Numbers 14:33, Numbers 18:6, Numbers 32:18, Deuteronomy 5:15, Deuteronomy 6:12, Deuteronomy 7:6-7, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 12:8-11, Deuteronomy 14:2, Deuteronomy 14:21, Deuteronomy 16:18, Deuteronomy 32:9, Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 33:29, Joshua 3:17, Joshua 5:6, Joshua 14:1-5, Judges 2:13, Judges 4:2, Judges 6:2, Judges 6:6, 1 Samuel 8:5, 1 Samuel 8:7, 1 Samuel 8:22, 1 Kings 8:53, 1 Kings 11:31, 1 Kings 12:19-20, 2 Kings 17:32, 2 Kings 18:11, 2 Kings 23:33, 2 Kings 24:16, 2 Kings 25:11, 1 Chronicles 16:13, Ezra 1:1-4, Psalm 48:3, Psalm 76:1, Psalm 96:5, Psalm 105:6, Psalm 115:3-4, Psalm 135:4, Psalm 137:6, Isaiah 2:8, Isaiah 27:12, Isaiah 41:8, Isaiah 45:4, Isaiah 51:2, Jeremiah 2:11-13, Jeremiah 7:25, Jeremiah 8:5, Jeremiah 13:9, Jeremiah 26:4, Jeremiah 33:26, Jeremiah 35:15, Jeremiah 44:4, Jeremiah 44:17, Ezekiel 20:18, Ezekiel 20:30, Ezekiel 38:17, Amos 1:1, Malachi 2:4-7, John 8:33, John 8:39, John 8:41, John 9:28-29, Acts 6:14, Acts 7:51, Acts 21:21, Acts 22:3, Romans 1:28, Romans 3:2, Romans 9:4-5, 2 Corinthians 11:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Hebrews 9:1, Hebrews 9:8-11, Hebrews 10:1

### **The Gentiles: The Predestined Whom God Always Planned to Save**

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### **Romans 9: Israel (the Elect), Hardens Its Heart**

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### **Romans 9 (Context): The Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles is No Longer Relevant**

Romans 1:13, Romans 1:16, Romans 2:9-10, Romans 2:12-15, Romans 2:17-18, Romans 2:20, Romans 2:23-29, Romans 3:1, Romans 3:9, Romans 3:19-21, Romans 3:27-29, Romans 3:31, Romans 4:5, Romans 4:9, Romans 4:11-14, Romans 4:16, Romans 4:19-20, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 5:13, Romans 5:20, Romans 6:14, Romans 7:1-9, Romans 7:12, Romans 7:14, Romans 7:16, Romans 7:21-23, Romans 7:25, Romans 8:2-4, Romans 8:7, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:4, Romans 9:6, Romans 9:24-25, Romans 9:27, Romans 9:30-33, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:4-5, Romans 10:8-13, Romans 10:19, Romans 10:21, Romans 11:2, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:11-13, Romans 11:25-26, Romans 13:8-10, Romans 15:10-12, Romans 15:16, Romans 15:18, Romans 15:27, Romans 16:4

### **Romans 9-10 (Main Point): Whosoever Calls on the Name of the Lord**

Genesis 22:18, Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1-2, Psalm 84:2, Psalm 107:9, Isaiah 45:21-22, Amos 8:11-13, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 9:12, Matthew 10:14, Matthew 10:32, Matthew 10:42, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 18:4, Matthew 21:44, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 3:35, Mark 8:35, Mark 8:38, Mark 9:41, Luke 1:53, Luke 6:21, Luke 6:25, Luke 18:11-14, John 1:7, John 1:29, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, John 5:11, John 6:27, John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51, John 11:51-52, John 12:32, John 12:47, Acts 13:39, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:5, Romans 3:21-23, Romans 5:3-4, Romans 5:12, Romans 9:10, Romans 9:33, Romans 10:3-4, Romans 10:11-12, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Galatians 3:8-9, Galatians 3:16, Galatians 3:29, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Hebrews 2:9, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, 1 John 5:19

## **Romans 11 (Conclusion): Gentiles, Grafted into Israel**

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## **Ephesians 1-2: The Wall Between Jews (the Elect) and Gentiles Broken Down**

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### **Humility**

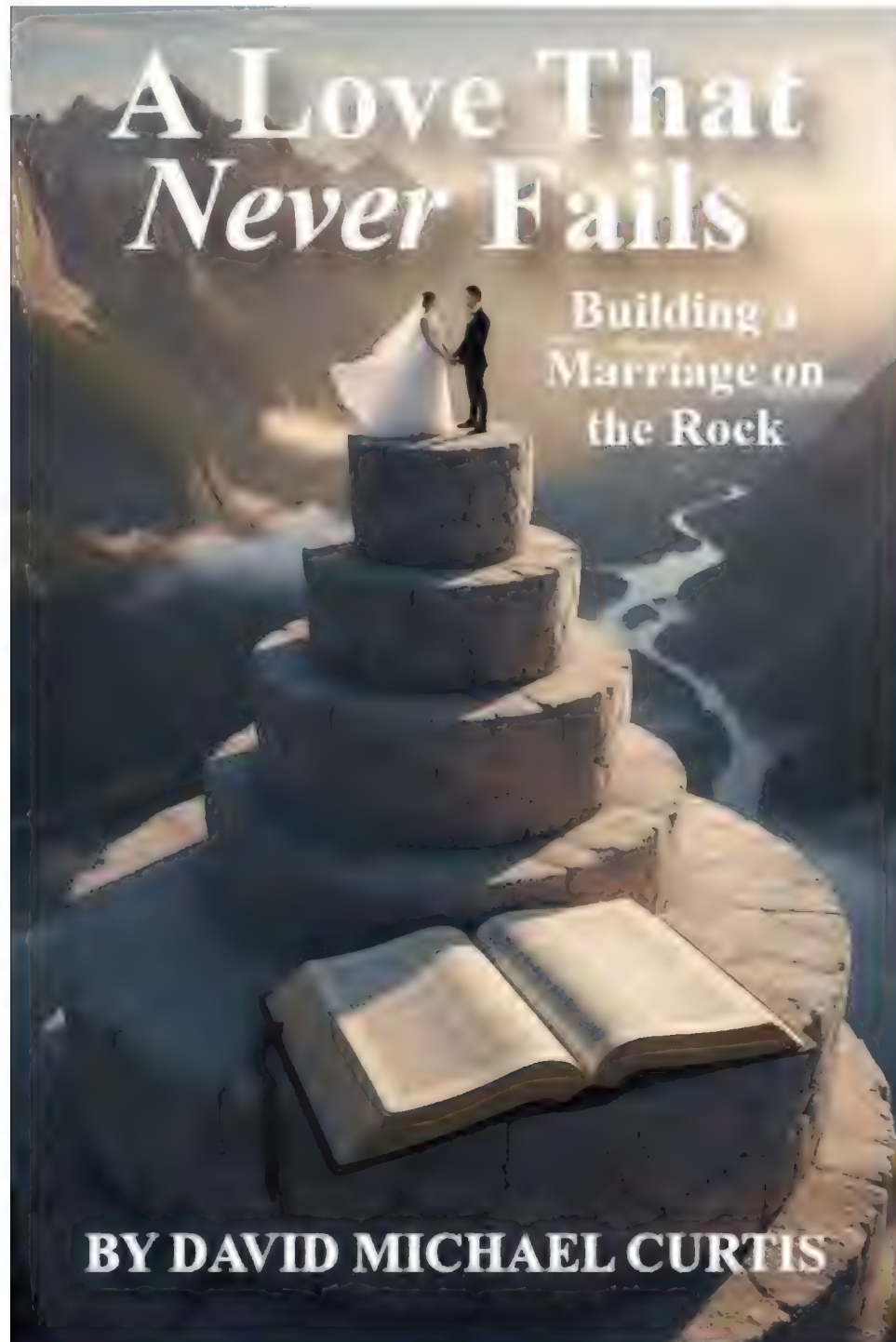
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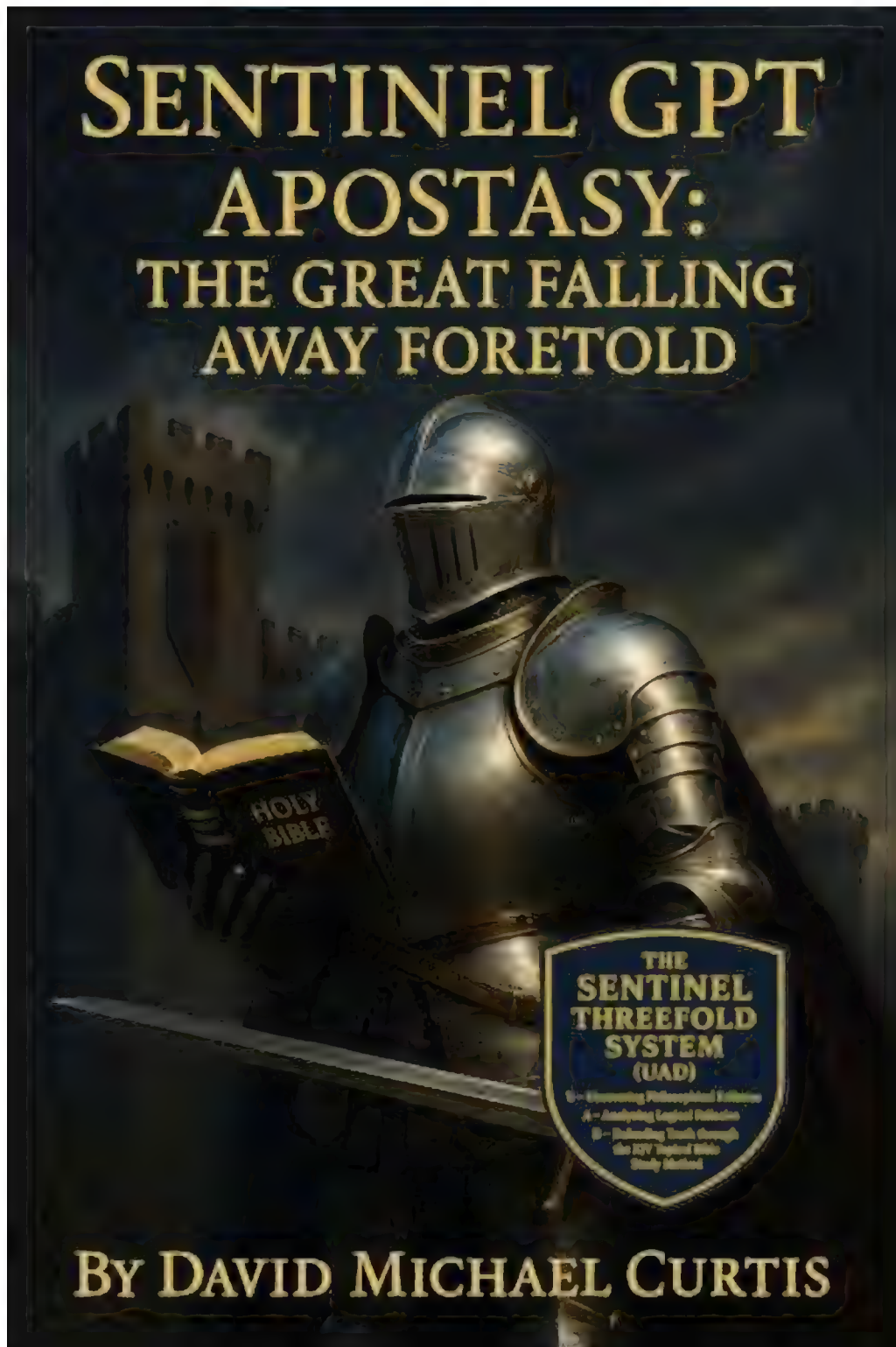
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